

Land and housing practices in Namibia:
cases of access to land rights and production of housing
in Windhoek, Oshakati and Gobabis

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Thesis presented for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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November 2018

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Abstract

As in many other places, socio-spatial production in modern Namibia has been a top-down practice approached in professionalised and standards-oriented ways, focused on outputs. 'Participation' or involvement of 'beneficiaries' has over time been added to the repertoire of such practices, but this remains driven by a one-dimensional definition of what's 'better'. Even when the modernist and centrally-controlled practice of Apartheid is generally condemned, its ways with regards to spatial production remain largely unquestioned and, by consequence, preserved and expanded.

At the same time, the urban transformation that Namibia has seen in recent decades has been astonishing. These changes expose the limits of previous approaches and at the same time lay bare new openings for socio-spatial production. There are various practices that have been part of this urban transformation, but they remain largely undocumented. Furthermore, even when they are approached, they tend to be assessed in terms of their outcomes; relegating the ways of the process as a matter of lesser importance.

My research accounts for three practices of socio-spatial production in three urban areas in Namibia today. These spaces have been the result of a considerable number of iterations, and have been made possible through the contribution of a wide array of participants; many of them performing beyond their 'main' role. I have documented these practices from their beginnings up to the point in which they are today. My research is structured as a case study. Within it, I have undertaken semi-structured qualitative interviews with participants, and also employed maps, official documents, and photographs to triangulate the accounts. I have then brought these together with debates on co-production and *autogestion*, exploring whether the practices can be understood in these terms. Other subsidiary debates fundamentally related to these two are those on state and civil-society divisions; the nature of grassroots associations ('social movements'); and on-going and long-standing debates on land and housing.

My analysis suggests that, while the way in which the practices take place varies greatly, they can be considered the sites of various kinds of innovation. I have also found that the

ways of the grassroots, while having legitimacy and equality as strong values, show new options in terms of representation. I have found that co-production, as understood in the more recent literature, is a useful way to understand the practices, particularly if a variety of strategies is recognised. *Autogestion* is a useful term to keep in mind, and although such term has some overlaps with the recent concepts of autogestion, only some understandings of the term stemming from practice enable a reading of the cases I document. The division between civil society and the state today consists of a constellation of parties not necessarily fitting in these two categories. The practices stand also as the more recent evidence within a trajectory of production of space undertaken through a social process involving the grassroots in Namibia, one in which visibility and participation are no longer the only aims, but where negotiation and some degree of autonomy is sought. Lastly, land ownership (real or perceived) emerges as a powerful force in making the process collective and enabling socio-spatial development. Land rights are exercised throughout, often irrespective of the degree of *de jure* tenure at stake. Housing becomes a device for savings and resource mobilisation, as well as an income-generating activity sometimes enabling further livelihoods.

My study adds to on-going debates on co-production, and to some extent to those on *autogestion*. For the first, it expands on earlier observations that brought the term to the socio-spatial realm and provides new openings for the term to establish bridges to other debates. It also contributes to the archive of socio-spatial practices in Namibia, and to the pending project of a socio-spatial history of the country. It provides new insights for those engaged in socio-spatial production of what are the experiences and the openings for a new kind of practice that moves away from the assumptions that have placed us in the urban crisis that characterises our times.

Acknowledgements

During the Urban Forum that we organised at the Namibia University of Science and Technology in 2017, Sheela Patel shared a story about her early days as a young professional in India. She said that one day, she tried to stop the eviction of an informal settlement. However, the police asked her to step aside and she had no choice but to abide; she then started crying about the situation. When some of the women that were being evicted saw this, they came to comfort her; telling her she should not be crying.

When she told the story, some in the audience laughed at the irony of the situation. Inhabitants of informal settlement, being evicted and dispossessed of their few assets for survival, comforting a young professional dismayed at the situation. She encouraged young professionals not to cry or get frustrated about the situation, but to engage further by starting projects, organising, and finding where would one's skills be best placed for the benefit of the more socially-relevant task.

This research is an act of listening; to address the 'what is to be done' through firstly accounting for the '*what happened?*'.

The patience and generosity of many made it possible for me to complete my doctoral research. My two supervisors certainly top the list of acknowledgements in this respect.

I would like to thank the Mexican Council of Science and Technology, who supported the first phase of my research work. I would also like to thank Lorena Zárate and Enrique Ortiz at the Habitat International Coalition in Mexico City, who kindly drafted for me a letter of support to apply for this grant; I thank them for this and for being a reference in my work.

The IJURR Foundation kindly supported the writing-up period through a grant.

Everyone who found time to spend with me in the context of this project is greatly thanked, the list of interviewees is included in the Annexures. Many are not listed there because their accounts were not included in this final draft, listing them here would make up for a long list; however, I single out the two unions of domestic workers in Namibia that have partnered with me while I was still in the exploratory stages of my work.

Phillip Lühl for kindly reviewing my work and supporting me with practically everything else.

I would also like to thank the many people that made being enrolled at the University of Cape Town (UCT) a remarkable experience. The colleagues at Architecture, Planning and Geomatics for a collegial and friendly environment. The staff at the International Academic Programmes Office, who were friendly and diligent; and the staff at the Built Environment Library, who were resourceful and kind. Lastly, the student mobilisations during the more recent years at UCT and other universities were also an important reminder of how priorities needed to be rearranged. Questions of decolonisation echoed in me in particular ways; which have motivated me to engage further with such questions in future work.

I would finally like to thank Helen Vale and Kate Laburn Peart for language editing my thesis.

List of abbreviations and acronyms

AAPS	Association of African Planning Schools
AGM	Annual General Meeting
ALAN	Association of Local Authorities in Namibia
AR	Affirmative Repositioning
BTP	Build Together Programme, also sometimes referred to as only 'Build Together'
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CLIP	Community Land Information Programme
CRIAA	Centre for Research-Information-Action for Development in Africa
CSR	Corporate social responsibility
DASP	Department of Architecture and Spatial Planning
Dibasen	Short for Dibasen Homeless Committee of Katutura
FLT	Flexible Land Tenure
GIZ	German Cooperation Agency
HIC	Habitat International Coalition
HRDC	Habitat Research and Development Centre
LA/LAs	Local Authority/ies; for the purpose of this report, this includes Regional Councils, Municipalities, Town Councils, and Village Councils. In the document, almost everywhere it refers only to Municipalities and Town Councils. It excludes 'declared settlements', although they are sometimes included in some official documents as 'urban areas'.
LAC	Legal Assistance Centre
LPM	Landless Peoples' Movement
MHDP	Mass Housing Development Programme, also sometimes referred to only as 'Mass Housing'
MLR	Ministry of Land Reform
MoAWF	Ministry of Agriculture, Water and Forestry
MoHSS	Ministry of Health and Social Services
MOU	Memorandum of understanding
MULSP	Mass Urban Land Servicing Programme
MURD	Ministry of Urban and Rural Development, previously known as Ministry of Regional and Local Government and Housing (MRLGH) and thereafter Ministry of Regional and Local Government, Housing and Rural Development (MRLGHRD).
NALAO	Namibia Association of Local Authorities Officials
NBIC	National Building Investment Corporation
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
NHAG	Namibia Housing Action Group
NHE	National Housing Enterprise
NSDF	National Spatial Development Framework
NUST	Namibia University of Science and Technology
OHSIP	Oshakati Human Settlement Improvement Project
O/M/A	Organisations, Ministries and Agencies
OTC	Oshakati Town Council
PTO	Permission to occupy

SDFN	Shack Dwellers Federation of Namibia, sometimes also referred to as ‘the Federation’
SDI	Shack Dwellers International
TIPEEG	Targeted Intervention Programme for Employment and Economic Growth
UN	United Nations
UN-Habitat	United Nations Human Settlements Programme
UNAM	University of Namibia
Urban area	As per the National Land Policy, this refers to “all land in human settlements, of any size, under the jurisdiction of a separate authority other than a traditional authority, such as a municipality or town or village council” (Republic of Namibia, 1998:v).
WIL	Work-integrated learning

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1. Introduction

There was a time when the production of space was understood as the monopoly of a few. Then it was thought that if professionals engaged with inhabitants in the development of socio-spatial interventions (e.g. land servicing, housing construction) it would be sufficient to ground the project within a given social milieu, fine-tune propositions to local needs, and ultimately providing legitimacy to their efforts. The kind of engagement sought from inhabitants then had been for consultation purposes, for 'data-gathering', for mobilisation of inhabitants for the project's purposes. Invariably, the kind of engagement would be top-down: largely determined by one side (the state, professionals), focused on utilitarian purposes and because of this only conducted when required. This was the time when centralised power seemed the only way to both protect and control. And while this overall paradigm seemed to be on its way out, when some form of liberalisation started to take place, many of the ways of doing remained strongly; despite new practices emerging on the ground.

After a number of experiences with mixed results, and the extensive urban transformations that have overtaken planned approaches in Namibia and many other contexts, new questions emerge on how to engage with the contemporary socio-spatial reality. Answers to these questions cannot rely on a powerful centralised state, nor be based on the assumption of prospects of economic growth and mass formal employment; they also cannot necessarily assume the support of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) or the wide availability of foreign resources. At the same time, new resources become available; universities open up their classrooms to real-life situations; professionals take on the role of mediators between parties; and local governments find new agency either institutionally or within their own ranks. This is, therefore, a new setting for arguably a different kind of production of space.

My intention is not to argue for or against the cases I present in this thesis, my objective is instead to document three practices in the realm of land rights and housing production in three urban areas in Namibia. These have been the result of a considerable number of iterations, and as the reader will find, many situations were resolved as the process was in

course, reflecting that contemporary socio-spatial production in Namibia is in flux. I focus in particular on the social process at the grassroots, highlighting also the way of identifying agencies within the field.

1.1. The need to account for socio-spatial processes as they happen

My research aims at understanding contemporary land and housing practices in three urban areas in Namibia. It aims at accounting for the processes of socio-spatial production, which in this case refers to access, use and exchange, governance, improvement, as well as to a certain extent the everyday life unfolding through these. These practices entail a vast number of transactions and uses taking place in the socio-spatial field that fall 'outside' state programmes and formal governance, which is not well-documented by existing scholarship. Resources within the legal framework do not reach the lowest-income groups and the lower-middle class, leaving the bulk of the population to fend for themselves; and yet, the growth in population of towns and cities in Namibia have been formidable. Furthermore, urbanisation has undergone a substantial transformation, transitioning from there being virtually no informal settlements around independence in 1990, up to the point where most inhabitants of urban areas now live in one. However, the processes I document do not unfold entirely legally or illegally, 'outside' or with the state, but navigate in between, through grey zones, and sometimes drawing resources from different resources if needed and if possible.

To account for the disjunction between the land and housing options 'on paper' and the contemporary socio-spatial realities is the motivation for this research proposal. Roy argues that "it has become obvious that informal housing and land markets are not just the domain of the poor but that they are also important for the middle class, even the elite, of Second World and Third World cities" (Roy, 2005:147). At the same time, such socio-spatial dynamics are also not fully outside the realm of state-supported programmes and the recognised organisations involved in the production of housing, but indeed interact with them in a variety of ways. As I will show in the cases below, these practices draw on a wide

variety of resources, participants, and events, making the path of each practice unique. In other words, the spatial production that I account for is the domain of and important for a wide array of participants.

The research project accounts for how three practices develop, situating them within the particular context of Namibia, and ultimately assessing the possibility of employing two frameworks through which they can be understood: co-production and *autogestion*. Each of these terms contain debates and definitions which are contested, and while expanding on these discussions below (see 2.2.1 below), I include working definitions here that I will revisit in the concluding chapter (see Chapter 7 below). In the production of space, co-production offers to undertake an activity, usually the provision of a service, as a collaboration between different parties that would otherwise be undertaken by a single (or fewer, usually high-status) party; frequently, the parties involved are the state (central or local government) and civil society (inhabitants or associations), but it can also include professionals, the private sector, and universities. On the other hand, *autogestion* refers to a radical form of decentralisation of functions, traditionally attributed to the state, to organised groups of inhabitants through a political process. When approaching the research topic, these two concepts appeared as possible lenses through which the processes I document could be understood. As I will argue later in the concluding chapters, the usefulness of employing these terms in the specific cases I document, and in the particular case of Namibia, is both pertinent and contentious.

My thesis aims to address gaps in the research at different levels. At the empirical level, Namibia's spatial processes remain under-documented, contributing to the conservative view that 'the formal' and 'the informal' processes remain as separate domains, and that the latter is rather a messy process in need of 'formal' interventions. As I will argue, this perspective overlooks a shift in the way that spatial production is actually undertaken in contemporary Namibia. With few exceptions, Namibia's spatial production has not been theorised in terms of coproduction nor *autogestion*; in fact, it can be said that socio-spatial production in Namibia remains generally under-theorised. Furthermore, the fact that contexts such as Namibia are under-researched and absent from theoretical debates raises doubts as to whether the grounds and evidence on which theories and writings on 'African

urbanisation' that have been developed are in fact partial and biased towards a recurrent set of cities and countries. The existing literature on co-production, does make emphasis on the process, but the need to demonstrate that collaboration has taken place often leaves out the non-co-productive aspects and other important narratives to understand the process as fully as possible. *Autogestion*, on the other hand, is commonly associated with cases of the radical left, as if the term were the particular attribute of autonomous communes or radical democratic experiments. However, revisiting this term after decades of neoliberal regime, particularly in places where the limits of both state provision and private sector are increasingly evident, remains a pertinent task.

My research project is structured as a case study, composed of three practices each taking place in a different local authority (LA) in Namibia. Each practice is understood not exclusively in formal (i.e. a house, a plot of land), social (i.e. a household, an individual), legal (i.e. tenure, grassroots groups' constitution), or everyday life terms (i.e. conflicts, cultural aspects), but in a *relational* way: the manner in which all these components are related and the process that animates them. The existence of these dynamics emerged after four years of research and academic involvement in the context proposed. This is not a comparative study, I employ three cases to demonstrate the variety of experiences not only in geographical terms, but also in terms of participants, scales, and various other aspects that are discussed in detail below.

The work also stems from the wish to find new ways of engaging with the socio-spatial reality of Namibia, that may in turn hold lessons for other contexts in Southern Africa or the Global South. My work aims to depart from modernist criteria which subject practices to a latent desire for outputs. My approach is relational in that it tries to weave the various narratives into an account which does not lack contradictions, presenting how through old and newfound agencies, the processes have been sustained, developed, and transformed. In doing this, my work speaks not only to professionals, but also contains experiences valuable for a wide array of other stakeholders: local and central government, members of the private sector, students, foreign NGOs, among others. Key among these other stakeholders are grassroots groups and inhabitants often leading the process, but not always. Methodologically, my research attempts to engage with theory through case

studies, and to build an archive of practices of spatial production in Namibia. My work avoids normative statements and suggests instead the need to listen carefully to understand the openings for a different way of engaging with socio-spatial production.



Figure 1 Photographs of the three cases: Windhoek (top), Oshakati (middle), and Gobabis (bottom).

1.2. Key arguments and research questions

I argue that the practices can be understood by expanding the definition of co-production, rather than 'boxing' it into one 'type' of co-production. The concept of *autogestion* can, on the other hand, be understood in the way that thinkers as well as practitioners do; namely the theoretical propositions of Lefebvre or the more practice-based and oriented understanding that Ortiz and Zárate draw from the experiences of Habitat International Coalition members (see Table 2 in 2.2.1 below). However, it is the latter understanding that seems best suited for the practices I document here.

I further argue for a deeper understanding of land and housing concepts that depart from a mental conception that views the state and the civil society as a duality, that shapes urban governance debates in particular ways. Through newfound agencies and resources, different parties join the process of co-produced, bottom-up spatial production in a variety of roles; the crucial one being that of the mediator.

I place the land and housing practices vis-à-vis the socio-spatial trajectory of Namibia, which allows for an understanding of the practices as a product of a gradual progression of a socio-spatial crisis that has rendered the formal institutions and ways of the past largely obsolete. At the same time, when the land and housing practices are viewed in relation to some precedents, it seems clear that the common denominator has been the relative neglect of the social process and the imposition of 'best practice' ideas from elsewhere instead of applying a more modest inductive approach that listens to on-going processes and realities on the ground.

I argue that land rights and tenure are key enablers of making collective the social process, even if only perceived. I also argue on the pervasive influence of the policy-legal framework, and also on the individualise structure of the city as a challenge to collectivisation. I also note the lack of discussion on spatial matters, particularly in debates on co-production.

Below, I outline my research questions, expanding briefly on each of them.

1. How do land and housing practices produce space? With this question I try to account for the ‘what happened’ drawing from as many viewpoints as possible. My objective was to present the in-between story (i.e. reading between the lines, the subtext) among the various accounts. I did not strive to ‘reconcile’ them and therefore, in some cases, conflicting accounts have been included and discussed.

2. How do inhabitants and the grassroots go about the process? Here I attempt to expand on the social process at the grassroots level as far as possible. The question is not simply designed to account for accessing a resource, but also for other events that involve transacting, negotiating, confronting, mobilising; and to a certain extent, everyday life.

3. How do the participants relate to one another within the practices? Here I apply two frames to understand the practices, that of co-production and *autogestion*. On the one hand, I outline the various modalities of co-production through which the practices I document can be understood; on other hand, I also explore whether the notion of *autogestion*, as proposed by thinkers and practitioners, can be a useful way to understand the practices.

4. How can these practices be situated in the socio-spatial trajectories in Namibia and in the land and housing debates? With this question I situate the practices within the trajectory that Namibia has followed in terms of its historical development, with specific focus on the intersection of socio-spatial interventions and social organisation. I also relate some of the experiences of these practices with on-going and long-standing debates on land rights and housing.

1.3. Methodological strategy

I document and discuss three examples of low-income groups accessing urban land as a case study, and within them I’ve employed mainly qualitative methods. I have done this as my research views the practices as social relations, for which qualitative methods have specific

relevance. I have documented the accounts of participants in these practices through semi-structured interviews; transcribed these verbatim or, in some cases, taken notes; I present these as narratives in the chapter describing the cases (see 5 below). I have also gathered documents such as plans, council minutes, maps, aerial photographs, and taken photographs myself. I have used these to triangulate and sometimes complement some of the information I have gathered through the interviews. My main objective in structuring my study in this way is to account for the ‘what happened’.

The three processes present the reader with a variety of experiences in various respects. This variety arises in terms of geographies: Oshakati, a growing town in the ‘communal’ North of the country; Windhoek, the capital city and largest municipality in the central highlands; and Gobabis, a smaller town in the east with a growing population but uncertain economic base. This variety is not sought for representation purposes, but to demonstrate the wealth of difference in terms of socio-spatial production in contemporary Namibia. Furthermore, the study is not comparative as my approach is not to create a taxonomy of ‘types’ but rather to demonstrate the possibilities with respect to experiences (for a table organising some of the aspects of the three practices, see 9.1 below). I provide a number of visualisations of the processes with the purpose of tracing the events, highlighting the time, situations, and geographical scales.

1.4. The land and housing practices in question

The case of Windhoek is a practice led by one single housing group comprising fifty households. The groups’ objective was to access land and eventually shelter. They have developed two large blocks of land into individual plots and houses, up to the point that makes the outcome indistinguishable from other ‘formal’ areas in the neighbourhood; both in terms of design aspects, services and, in the foreseeable future, freehold title. It was the leadership of the group that spearheaded this process, benefitting from the political leverage that representing fifty households provided, as well as from support from professionals. The LA played a key role, particularly the ‘Community Development’ and the

‘Planning, Urbanization and Environment’ sections. In this particular case, central government played a late but significant role in mobilising political and economic support. The private sector also played a favourable role for the group; first, at a smaller scale, then in a vital way. However, the case can be regarded as paradigmatic in nature, providing lessons but not necessarily an exemplar.

The case of Oshakati is about a practice mainly led by the Shack Dwellers Federation of Namibia (SDFN) based there, on the efforts of different saving groups totalling 160 households. The Federation’s objective was to access land and develop it to benefit from municipal services and later to construct houses based on the standard typology used by the Federation nation-wide. They benefitted from the professional and technical assistance of the support NGO, the Namibia Housing Action Group (NHAG) and, to a certain degree, from the local authority. This process has the special characteristic of having had to negotiate with traditional land owners at the edge of the town’s jurisdiction and those who were allocated land by them to address the land tenure situation. This case is arguably not unique, but representative of a wider phenomenon happening in expanding urban areas which are surrounded by communal land.

The case of Gobabis is a complex practice that grew from the upgrading of one individual settlement to a ‘city-wide’ endeavour aimed at upgrading all the informal settlements in the Municipality. Accounts vary on whether the support NGO (NHAG), the Federation (SDFN), or the Federation members drove the process; however, I argue that the spearheading role shifted throughout the trajectory of the practice. Today, the ‘city-wide’ settlement upgrading efforts involve tens of thousands of inhabitants. The initial objective of the support NGO and their one-time partner, a Spanish NGO, was to persuade the LA to support in-situ upgrading instead of relocation of inhabitants, and it now aims to undertake participatory upgrading and planning for the informal settlements in the entire Municipality. This practice can also be considered a *set of practices* led primarily by the support NGO, based on the efforts of the federated groups as well as from inhabitants that are neither associated in groups nor federated under SDFN. The Namibia University of Science and Technology (NUST) has played a significant role not only in contributing to the spatial planning of the process, but also in opening the door for architecture, planning and other

students to these real-life experiences. This practice includes various processes: enumeration, installation of infrastructure, education; some of these have subsequently either phased out, some continue, and others involve Gobabis, but not only this town. In short, Gobabis is a place where a considerable variety of interventions have taken place.

1.5. Structure of the thesis

Chapter 2 lays out the theoretical and thematic field with which I engage. I argue that the theoretical frame employed is of post-structural nature, and expand on why this is suitable for the study of social relations and why such a frame is relevant for socio-spatial topics. I then outline the thematic field of land rights and housing debates, in which the practices are situated. The core part explores the debates on co-production and *autogestion*, state-civil society relations, as well as those that focus on grassroots groups.

Chapter 3 presents the methodological strategy of my work. It argues for the usefulness of case studies to account for socio-spatial processes in the particular context of Namibia. I also substantiate the choice of methods I employ within the case study, and outline the selection criteria for the practices I have included. Furthermore, ethical considerations as well as issues of methodology in the particular case of socio-spatial processes are laid out in this section.

Chapter 4 provides a summary of some aspects of Namibia's socio-spatial development. I present the policy and legislative framework relevant to land rights and housing, and then argue why one can speak of a land and housing crisis in Namibia today. I also provide a short overview of the trajectory of local government as well as a brief outline of the state of professional practice as well as new developments in universities in the socio-spatial realm. The largest section consists of a short history focusing on the intersection between social organisation and projects dealing with housing and urban land in Namibia.

Chapter 5 presents the narratives of the three practices on which I base my thesis, as briefly outlined in the preceding section.

In Chapter 6 I discuss the accounts in Chapter 5 and relate them to the work outlined in Chapter 2. I conclude this chapter by outlining the limits of my thesis.

In the final chapter (7) I address my research questions. I start by reminding the reader of the objectives of my research and with a short reflection on the methods employed. I then provide a synthesis of the practices, and then present the outcomes of analysing these employing the concepts of co-production and *autogestion*. I situate the practices within the historical trajectories I outline in earlier chapters, and afterwards provide a summary of the theoretical propositions. The last sub-section deals with openings for future research.

I have produced all the figures unless otherwise noted.

2. Literature Review

This chapter outlines the theoretical and socio-spatial production frames within which my study is situated. Firstly, I write about the theoretical framework of my study, which directly informs the methodological framework that I then discuss more in the following chapter. Next, I provide an historical overview to situate the references employed. This is followed by the *fulcrum* of my work, which centres on the practices. This is the longest section where I discuss the ways in which the practices I document can be theorised. Firstly, I discuss the debates on co-production and *autogestion*; and then move on to outline two subsidiary debates that are crucial in these two, namely the divisions between state and civil society and the question of the grassroots (or ‘social movements’). After this section, I briefly discuss some of the key literature with respects to the issues of land rights and housing production as a way to outline the thematic field in which my work focuses.

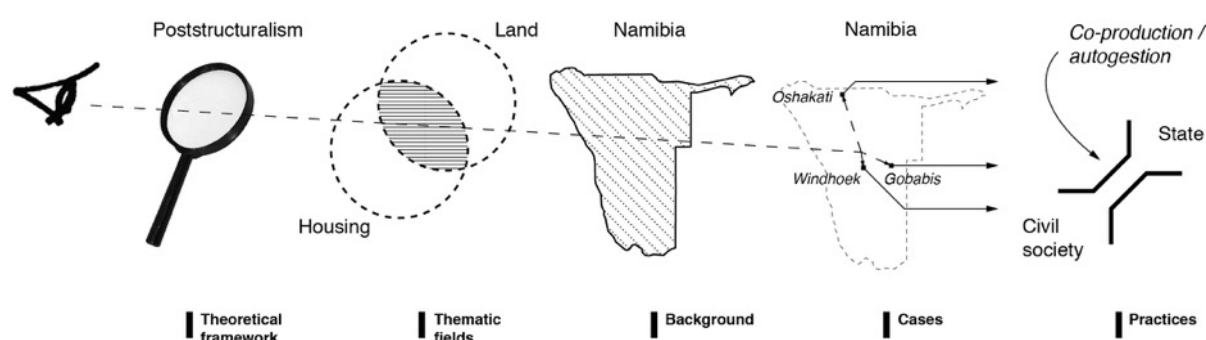


Figure 2 Visual organising the content of the thesis.

2.1. Theoretical framework

In this section, I outline the field of knowledge production where I propose to situate my research. I first outline the theoretical underpinnings that informs both the literature in this section and the methodological decisions that I lay out in the Methodology chapter (see 3 below). In short, I propose a post-structuralist perspective which is closely related to critical urban theory, where the agency of social relations takes centre stage in spatial production. I

then present a brief historical frame that highlights key historical events that contextualise the paradigms discussed in this chapter.

2.1.1. Theoretical underpinnings of the study

It is often that socio-spatial issues, particularly urban land and housing, remain conceptually and methodologically approached through structuralist and functionalist frames with positivist and modernist aspirations. In other words, concerns centre on how can *more*, *quicker*, and *cheaper* outputs (e.g. houses, land titles) be delivered; more recent additions to this list ask the question on how *smart*, *sustainable*, *resilient* (among a long list) can the socio-spatial realm become. While acknowledging that material outcomes can be used to influence outcomes, these modernist paradigms have undergone a number of transformations that have created the conditions for other priorities to claim their space: issues of equity, race, gender, decoloniality, amongst many others. This transition from a modernist-functionalist to concerns with wider questions can be also read in the trajectory that qualitative research has itself undergone (see 3.2 below) and can be also identified in the trajectories of ‘urban research’ that Stren outlines for the African continent in the second half of the 20th Century (1994). The trajectory invariably starts with endeavours with modernist-positivist objectives. Discussing the theoretical aspects of *autogestion*, Lefebvre notes that “[c]ontemporary experience shows us only too well that there can be economic and technological *growth* without real social *development*, without the enrichment of social relations” (Lefebvre, 2009:139). Without emphasis on *the way* that development is attained, he writes, social development becomes instead “mutilated movement” leaving “stagnant numerous sectors of social reality: the life of politics, ideology, culture, and aesthetics” (2009:139). This is a point that will be argued further from the historical perspective in the section below (see 2.1.2 below). What I intend to outline in this section are the theoretical underpinnings of the *way* of apprehending the socio-spatial processes on which I focus. I argue that this has in part to do with the knowledge paradigm that is dominant at the time in which key housing interventions and growth of urban areas took place (see Figure 3), a heavy legacy which we as professionals or practitioners carry. Another factor is the centrality of the state which characterises both research and spatial production. It is,

therefore, crucial to trace some of the shifts that have sought to depart from the modernist-positivist-structuralist frame. My objective for this study is to be theoretically premised on paradigms that allow for a practice-centred form of inquiry, while at the same time not disregarding structural factors.

The first task is to situate the authors mentioned within this section in a trajectory of socio-spatial knowledge production. After the foundations of social research were laid out by Marx, Weber and Durkheim, an era of structuralist social inquiry followed in the early 20th Century. This was challenged by the conditions created by the overall liberalisation that took place in the second half of the century, where conceptual frameworks such as structural functionalism and rational choice theories started to give way to other more fluid and wider frames, such as symbolic interactionism, feminist and queer theory, among others. This moment of transition can be illustrated by the work of Bourdieu and Giddens, which challenge objectivist-functionalist theories, while at the same time incorporating contemporary readings of Marxist thought. The key figure that I draw from in this respect is the spatial body of work of Henri Lefebvre. His approach does not conform to an historical materialist approach primarily concerned with the economic base, but brings to the fore aspects of everyday life. He was developing his spatial body of work during the time of liberation movements in Africa, where the decolonial thinking of Fanon started to challenge the very dominance of the production of knowledge in the colonial world (Gordon, 2015). While some have attempted to bridge Fanon's thought with the work of Lefebvre (Kipfer, 2007), the task for a socio-spatial form of inquiry based on a synthesis of decolonial thought with critical urban theorists remains a pending task.

Contemporary re-appropriations of Marx's work propose that capital should be understood as social relations. This helps to move away from an inquiry focused only on the material aspects of the issue at stake, which often reduces analyses to the task of demonstrating how the capitalist mode of production does not work. Marx himself saw the limits of orthodox materialist analysis in his Theses of Feuerbach: "The principal defect of all materialism up to now [...] is that the external object, reality, the sensible world, is grasped in the form of *an object or an intuition*; but not as a *concrete human activity*, as *practice*, in a subjective way" (as quoted in Bourdieu 1977:vi, emphasis on the original, my own

underlining). Bourdieu's 'theory of practice' situates practice beyond objectivist approaches; he observes with concern that "practices are seen as no more than the acting-out of roles, the playing of scores or the implementation of plans" (1990:53). Giddens' 'theory of structuration' aims to focus on the understanding of the agency and the time-space dimension of social interactions. Giddens notes that functionalist and structuralist social theories, such as those of Parsons and Althusser, give "priority to the object over the subject or, in some sense, to structure over action" (1979:50). He proposes a distinction between agency and structure, in which the former refers to the 'free will' of human agency while the latter refers to the existing social structures that in turn provide a frame. However, the focus remains structuralist in nature, as the 'social systems' within which the agency and the structure find themselves, emerge as precisely the pre-determined setting where Bourdieu observes practices often end up relegated. A frame of spatial production where human agency takes centre stage is, therefore, where the Lefebvrian concept of *autogestion* and the *right to the city* provide useful tools.

To place the agency of social interactions at the centre of the analysis implies a significant departure from the place that is commonly attributed to thinkers employing the work of Marx in their work. The work of Lefebvre is a key example of this. Brenner situates Lefebvre along with David Harvey and Manuel Castells as the central figures of *critical urban theory* (2009). He traces the epistemological origins of critical urban theory in Marx, subsequently developing through the Frankfurt School, which provided the 'critical theory' frame which was notorious for the almost absent role that 'space' played in its analysis. According to Brenner, it would be precisely Lefebvre, Harvey and Castells who would 'spatialise' critical theory and pave the way for *critical urban theory*. Lefebvre's work has also found resonance in Latin America; in South Africa, Huchzermeyer invokes Lefebvre's work to call for a kind of 'humanism' in Southern contexts (Huchzermeyer, 2013) placing social relations centrally within spatial processes. While still today most key theories and research on cities and urbanisation as recognised in mainstream academia come from the Global North (Brenner & Keil, 2006; LeGates & Stout, 2011), recent efforts have mobilised Global South urban knowledge (Parnell & Oldfield, 2014; Miraftab & Kudva, 2015). However, in the case of Sub-Saharan Africa, both the source of evidence and base of the authors remains geographically uneven. Namibia is a classical omission in studies on urbanisation in Africa; which may be

explained by the paucity of local research production, which may itself be simply due to lack of funding and other incentives for knowledge production. Therefore, the task that appears in this genealogy of socio-spatial knowledge production is to account for the less-researched processes that are also constitutive of Sub-Saharan and/or Southern Africa's so-called 'urban revolution' (Parnell & Pieterse, 2014), arguably further providing distinctive characteristics for urban knowledge of the Global South.

The interrogation of role of the State is also key in the work of Lefebvre, particularly through his writings on *autogestion*. One of the theoretical problems that he raises about *autogestion* is that it must strive to call "the State into question" (2009:147) and move "from the base to the summit, from the component to the totality" (2009:148). For Lefebvre, *autogestion* cannot be reduced to operate only in a cluster within a limited State-demarcated frame, where a "narrow, doomed conception" of *autogestion* "dissolve[s] society into distinct units, communes, businesses, services" (2009:148). In a strict reading of this, there cannot be *autogestion* operating in harmony within a state-centred whole. The concept is, therefore, unitary and is theoretically understood by Lefebvre as a movement where the role of the State is eventually assumed by inhabitants themselves. It is then, that "members of a free association take control over their own life, in a way that it becomes their work [*oeuvre*]" (2009:150). This is here presented as a mode for "appropriation, de-alienation" (2009:150) from the way that the state, which arguably includes local government, fragments the production of space, alienating inhabitants from their *right to the city*. Harvey's reading of Lefebvre's *right to the city* calls for an understanding of it as *the right to transform* the places we inhabit. This emerges as crucial because if it is true that *by changing the cities we transform ourselves*, what is at stake is the very right to transform ourselves (2008). The key question that emerges here is: *who is going to give meaning to what this right entails, who is going to it, and how?* To operationalise this question, particularly in a non-structuralist way, a brief mention of practice theory is in order.

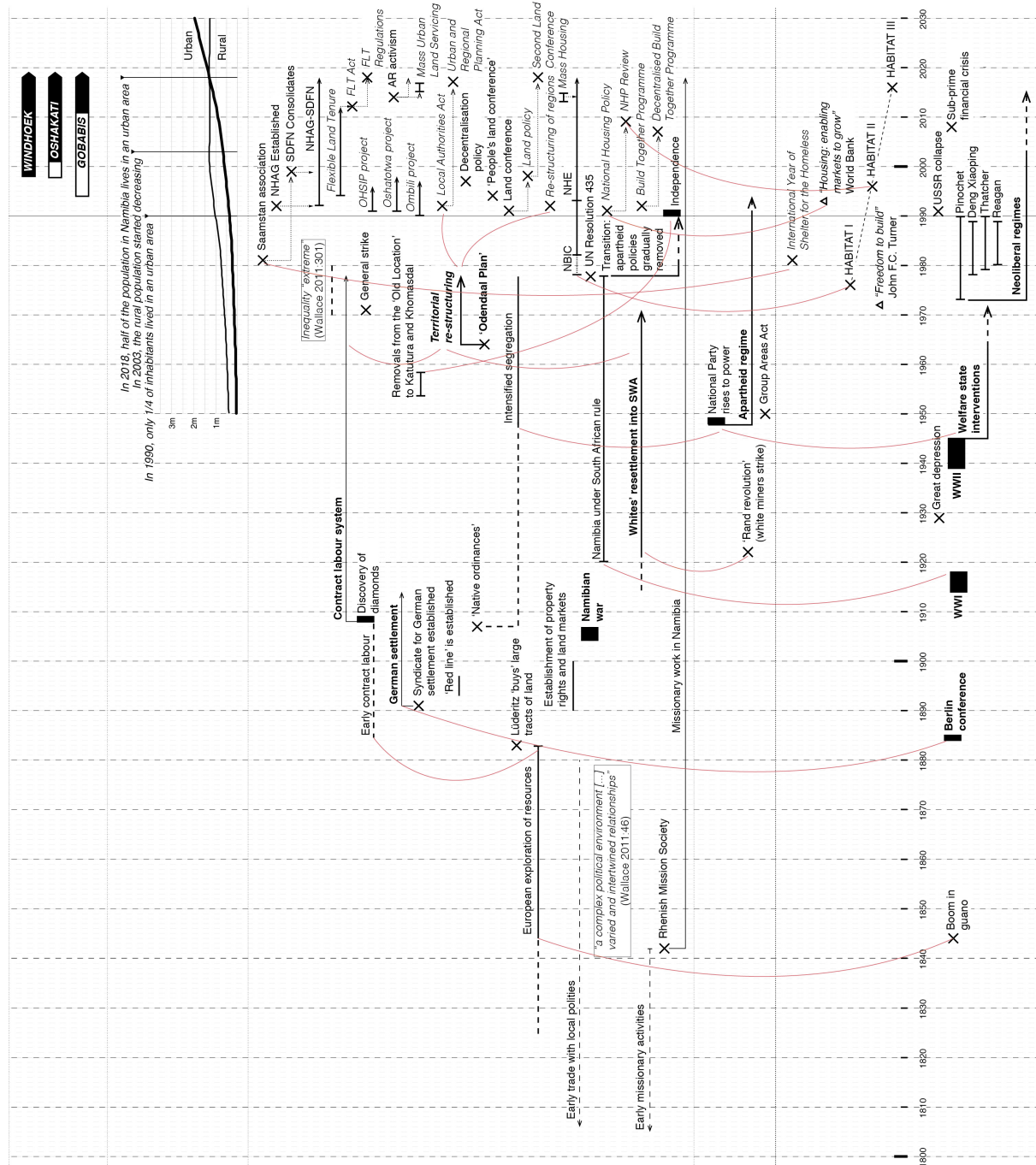
Practice theorists, mostly operating within the field of sociology and cultural anthropology, position *practice* against theoretical paradigms focusing on the individual as a point of departure for social order. As Schatzki provocatively argues:

“Thinkers once spoke of ‘structures,’ ‘systems,’ ‘meaning,’ ‘life world,’ ‘events,’ and ‘actions’ when naming the primary generic social thing. Today, many theorists would accord ‘practices’ a comparable honor” (2001:10)

Theorists in this field contrast *practice* with paradigms they deem as ‘individualisms’; i.e. rational choice theory, methodological individualism, or network analysis. They furthermore position practice theory as an alternative to structuralism, systems theory, semiotics, and the “many strains of humanism and post-structuralism” (Schatzki, 2001:11). Practice theorists place *practices* against various other approaches to social organisation, including “agreements (Hobbes); shared internalized norms (Durkheim, Parsons, and Habermas); skills, mutual understandings, and reciprocal interpretations (ethnomethodology); communication, negotiation, and mutual adjustment (symbolic interactionism); and coercion and domination” (2001:13). Critics question how the use of ‘practice’ in social theory can be considered “discrete natural objects with causal powers” (Baert & Domínguez Rubio, 2009:68). What these debates show is that practice theorists see ‘practice’ as encompassing some of the features that other theorists see in isolation and is, therefore, a unitary alternative to many established paradigms, but questions remain on whether one can consider them altogether as ‘objects’ with special attributes. It is here therefore that, by drawing from such a frame, a methodological contribution from the present study lies.

2.1.2. Historical frame

I have developed a timeline to situate my project within key events that have shaped the paradigms I have mentioned in the previous section. To undertake this, I mention some key historical developments with specific relation to what was taking place in the region and locally (see Figure 3).



While colonisation may be one of the key defining aspects in Africa, others question whether this was not the way in which, through colonialism, the capitalist mode of production was introduced in the colonies; including spatial production. Drawing precisely from the socio-spatial field, Coquery-Vidrovitch argues, “[t]he main difference [in Africa’s history of cities] lies between precapitalist and the capitalist situation [...] not between the colonial and postcolonial city on one side, and precolonial on the other” (1991:21). The

introduction of the capitalist mode of production in Africa in the 19th Century, was then closely affected by what was taking place in Europe; particularly the two world wars. The post-war economic boom and the welfare states that emerged later, were also elements that can be read spatially in Southern Africa. One example is how South Africa's colonial project (which included at that time Namibia) employed the welfare state as means of control. In the field of housing production this is exemplified in the modernist approach in the work of Calderwood (1955), which was anchored on the idea of the strong central state as provider, and which significantly influenced the way that 'housing' was to be understood in South Africa (Vestbro, 2012), and by extension in Namibia. The subsequent introduction of the neoliberal paradigm in the 1970s and 80s affected socio-spatial production by limiting the role of the state as an enabler of private sector investment. This economic 'liberalisation' and structural adjustment can be seen alongside the rise of postmodernism, post-structuralism, postcolonial moments in Africa (Simon, 1995), as well as the rise of grassroots struggles (Mamdani & Wamba-dia-Wamba, 1995). Without going too much into the debates on neoliberalism in Africa, what is relevant to account for is how the nature of late capitalism, where 'all that is solid' seems to 'melt into the air', concurs with contemporary phenomena of precarisation of labour, the concomitant growth of 'the informal', and a 'withering away of the state'. However, more than lamenting the 'withering away' of structures, what is relevant to observe is how matters *reconfigure*. Roy has furthermore suggested that one looks at "informality as a *mode* of urbanization" (2005:148) and Meagher invites readers to see 'the informal' "as a social and historical process, rather than as a sector" (1995:264). Based on the state of affairs that Heintz and Valodia present in Sub-Saharan Africa (2008), where the vast majority of employment takes place in 'the informal', one can accept 'informality' as a *mode* of production of space as a fitting frame to comprehend the local situation. However, it is worth noting how informality has historically met harsh treatment in Africa, regardless of Apartheid or socialist regimes (Skinner, 2008:14). Such an informal mode of urbanisation is a fertile field for local economies and 'informal institutions' (Meagher, 2007) to emerge. This is mentioned not to idealise the sector or to conform with the idea that 'the informal' is 'being taken care of'; Rakodi warns that the sheer scale of the challenge of land delivery in the Global South can put considerable strain on informal institutions, in some cases "weakening and breaking [them] down" (Rakodi, 2006a:281). The debates on 'the informal' can be seen in conjunction with

urbanisation processes, as our late capitalist times may require modes of analysis and intervention far more contingent than 'the solid' ones imagined by the colonial-modern 'utopia' (Avermaete, Karakayali & Osten, 2010). Today, despite various restructurings stemming from this late form of capitalism and the specific characteristics of the continent's 'urban revolution', it seems that Mabogunje's diagnosis in the 1990s on the continental urban research agenda remains current: "The urban problematique in Africa revolves around the issues of who shapes the city, in what image, by what means and against what resistance" (Mabogunje, 1994:22, my underlining). Highlighting the question of *who* is that of the *how* ('by what means'); and it is here where I propose to focus.

2.2. Modalities of and participants in socio-spatial practice

In this section I discuss the practices in terms of how they relate, and thereafter delve further into two subsidiary debates that are important to discuss the way of how parties relate. I write about two modes in which engagement among parties can be conceptualised: through co-production and *autogestion*. I will expand on these two terms below. However, what is worth noting at this point is that while they are closely related, co-production and autogestion have different genealogies, which therefore demand them to be understood separately. Practices involving several actors problematise old divisions dividing competencies and inhibiting common action. The two 'classical' categories here are 'the state' and 'civil society'. I have understood the former as mentioned in the literature, but I expand on it by bringing forth the question of local government. Here, 'the state' is understood as a performative practice, in a way that the condition of the state is something that is not the monopoly of one particular institution (e.g. government) but rather something that can be considered *a role*. For the latter, I look at the roles that inhabitants and the grassroots play in the production of space. Here, I write of *grassroots* where there is a suggestion of some form of association, and of *inhabitants* when simply writing in plural of an ordinary person taking part in everyday life.

Co-production

The notion of co-production has acquired considerable currency in socio-spatial development, particularly in Global South debates. The term started in the field of public administration in the 1970s, 80s and 90s; but made its way into socio-spatial practices in the 2000s. It is in Ostrom's texts that early tenets of co-production can be situated, even when the discussions around 'participation' in urban development was already "widely recognised" in the 1980s, and the literature was already considered "extensive, if not overwhelming" at that time (Moser, 1989:79). Differently from 'participation', coproduction was at that point defined as "the process through which inputs used to produce a good or service is contributed by individuals who are not 'in' the same organization" (Ostrom, 1996:1073). This conceptualisation, however, is rather general as it does not specify whether one is speaking about public institutions, grassroots organisations, or the private sector. In socio-spatial debates, co-production generally refers to a partnership between two 'organizations' in particular: the public, either local or central government; and inhabitants or grassroots organisations. This reinforced the 'Weberian' divisions between public and private that Mitlin notes in the early texts on co-production in the 1980s (2008). The relationships still at this point is assumed to be largely between the state (local and central government) and the grassroots ('social movements'). Mitlin has outlined a number of ways in which the urban poor engage the state to access basic services (2008:3-4); these are:

- > Individualised (or household) market-based strategies, which focus on individual advancement within the opportunities offered by existing procedures;
- > Collective self-help strategies, which she notes can be sometimes undertaken without any state involvement;
- > Dependency-based strategies, that develop on a patron-client relationship and often used by power for political support;
- > Exclusion strategies, where frustration may lead to socially-unacceptable and/or criminal behaviour; and
- > Social movement strategies, which have as a key characteristic 'politicised mass action'.

These categories provide a useful way to imagine a potential taxonomy of engagements. However, processes can evolve from one of these categories to the next, and therefore the time at which the observation is made will influence the assessment of the process. Others have written of ‘institutionalised co-production’ (Joshi & Moore, 2004), which draws from Ostrom’s conceptualisation of co-production as the actual partnership of grassroots and public institutions for the delivery of goods or services (1996). However, the question arises on whether the less institutionalised encounters than the ‘partnerships’ outlined by Joshi and Moore can also be considered legitimate forms of service delivery. By making emphasis on formalised structures, the authors indirectly relegate more informal arrangements to the categories they propose to counter: institutions as “relics of ‘traditional’ institutions” or “incomplete versions of modern institutions” (2004:32). While I share the spirit of expanding the definition of ‘institution’, I see a danger in the institutionalised conceptions of co-production overseeing looser forms of interaction that may also be of importance in the production of space. However, irrespective of whether co-production modalities elude the categories presented above, the common denominator remains a focus on the engagement between parties rather than an overt emphasis on one of the parties themselves.

The question of politics in co-production appears to be less central than in debates of *autogestion*, yet it seems to be key to understand how the concepts relate. Watson notes that what the ‘variants of co-production’ and collaborative-communicative planning approaches have in common is the characteristic of *not* taking “a radical approach to social change” (2014:69). Here ‘radical’ appears to refer to what Mitlin calls ‘exclusion strategies’ (2008), but if one defines it as a measure aiming to achieve transformation in on-going and long-standing processes, then the definition of *autogestion* finds overlaps with the literature on co-production; take for instance Appadurai’s “patience as a long-term political strategy” (2001:30) and how “working with whomever is in power” (2001:29) can be a way to attain eventual radical transformations. In a similar vein, Rakodi observes how the efforts of ‘non-state actors’ in the case of Sub-Saharan Africa are limited to “survival and obtaining a share of resources, not at changing the formal rules and policies” (Rakodi, 2006a:277). Scholars on the radical left may agree when they diagnose that urban social movements in South Africa have done “poorly when it comes to constructing a new radical politics in the last decade”

(Bond, Desai & Ngwane, 2011:9). Namibia's government itself describes its own civil society as "weak and divided" (Republic of Namibia, 2005:i). The radical critique to social movements in South Africa observes how some movements spend their time discussing with local government and professionals on technical issues, and in some cases even joining their ranks. This coincides with Mayer's analysis on how political movements were defused in other contexts when engaging 'productively' with local government (2010). However, Mitlin reminds us that "just because the politics is not explicit does not mean that it is not present" (2008:4). The issue of politics in co-production appears therefore subordinated to the maintenance of a working relationship among the parties involved. However, it is possible for future studies to define the maintenance of such working relationship as 'radical', as the outcomes of these efforts may lead to different urban politics in the long run.

The interaction between the inhabitants and grassroots with authorities has also been a subject of analysis in co-production. Rakodi and Leduka show how it is sometimes the informal institutions that, particularly in the case of disputes, seek formal institutions "to protect their rights and investments" (2003:1). Recent literature has focused on the issue of mediation within this sphere of interaction, highlighting how often it is "experts or professional actors working with or alongside more popular organisations" (Piper & von Lieres, 2011:17) and highlighting issues of legitimacy, facilitation, and representation. This literature highlights questions such as 'who initiates the participation', 'how this participation occurs', and 'how is this mediated'; which appear to be significant aspects in the debates on co-production, but that do not sufficiently focus on than what is compromised on each side during the negotiations. Mitlin has taken the example of the Shack Dwellers Federation of Namibia (SDFN), together with those of similar movements in Brazil, India, and Pakistan, to exemplify co-production "with grassroots organizations engaging the state while at the same time maintaining a degree of autonomy within the delivery process" (Mitlin, 2008:10). The keyword here is *autonomy*, which in this context refers to the possibility of self-determination; something that at the level of nation-states would be equivalent to sovereignty. This freedom to determine one's own actions can be tested when an 'autonomous group' may decide to act against the interest of the wider constituency facing similar conditions. Some have observed how some grassroots

organisations are in a way also complicit in processes of displacement and exclusion (Roy, 2009). Maintaining the right to determine one's own actions, even if this may refer to 'the right' to make compromises, remains a key factor in allowing co-production to essentially remain an act between actual different parties.




Thanks to a more recent body of work trying to understand contemporary socio-spatial production in terms of co-production that we can at this point distinguish three phases of development of the term. The early stages where the definition started to take shape through the writings of Ostrom and Whitaker (1980), and where Albrechts notes that the shift from producing public goods to empowerment took place (2013). He discusses the meanings of coproduction in the Global North and South, and observes how the process emerged as utilitarian ('needs-based') but transitioned to the political ('rights-based') (2013:48). Mitlin refers to coproduction as "a political process that citizens engage with to secure changes in their relations with government and state agencies in addition to improve basic services" (Mitlin, 2008:352). Watson furthermore outlines how discussing coproduction in the Global South can't assume liberal democracies, strong states, advanced economies, equal access, among other characteristics generally taken from granted in the Global North (2014). She furthermore observed how, at her time of writing, that in the literature on coproduction the state appeared as "generally the instigator of the relationship" and, as it was mentioned earlier, that the balance of power remained "firmly on the state" (Watson, 2014:65).

It is perhaps here that we can observe a breaking point to another more recent set of writings on co-production that have only recently been released¹. Concepts like transdisciplinarity (Simon et al, 2018) or intersectionality (Castán Broto & Neves Alves, 2018) are brought together with co-production to expand the applicability of the term and/or bring other pressing contemporary considerations to co-productive practices. In these more recent texts, joint endeavour does not merely refer to engagement between the state (central or local government) and inhabitants, but includes universities, support NGOs, and independent professionals; and where 'the balance of power' is redistributed among

¹ At the time of writing, the journal *Environment and Urbanization* started to place online some of the articles included in an upcoming issue focused on co-production (October 2018).

these various actors, even up to a point in which the state is only required for a specific contribution at a specific time. Reflecting on the experience of the Muungano wa Wanavijiji, Shack Dwellers International (SDI) affiliate in Kenya, Lines and Makau affirm that the process is the central element in their activities, and that “for co-production to occur it is not necessary for the state and its citizens to work under one organizational framework, or to be focused on the same specific project, or even geography” (Lines & Makau, 2018:15). It is therefore in this third, more recent iteration of co-production where the practices I document could arguably find a place.

Table 1 Early, later and recent co-production

	Early	Later	Recent (socio-spatial)
Dates	1980s, 90s	2000s	2010s
Who initiates?	State	Social movement ¹	Various stakeholders
Parties	State-civil society	State, civil society and support NGO	As many as required and/or possible
Mediators	No	Yes	Yes ² , but found on the side of different parties.
Power	Not at stake	At stake	
State	Strong	Weak, autocratic	Decentralised
State configuration	Western liberal democracy	Local configurations	
General aim	Efficiency	Empowerment	Self-determination
Bottom-up aim	Visibility	Change way of governing	Self/co-government
Mode of engagement	Participation	Negotiation	
Politics			
Autonomy			
Geography			
Disciplines	Public administration	Development studies, planning	Socio-spatial disciplines ³ , transdisciplinary
Examples	United States, United Kingdom	SDI, Asian Coalition for Housing Rights	Smaller examples not necessarily federated
Proponents	Ostrom Whitaker	Mitlin Joshi & Moore Watson	Castán Broto and Neves Alves

¹ As defined by Bebbington and others (2009).

² This risks a contradiction in terms, as I am arguing that the ‘state-civil society’ divisions blur and become more complex; therefore who would be a ‘mediator’ in the ‘Later’ stage, finds itself mediating not necessarily between the state and the grassroots or inhabitants, but sometimes between other stakeholders as well (e.g. private sector, universities).

³ This can include surveying, urban design, architecture, among others.

Autogestion

On the other hand, when a movement associates and takes action, not as 'self-help' but as a conscious alternative to the status quo, there is the possibility of *autogestion*. More than simply a direct translation from the French and Spanish as 'self-management', *autogestion* stems out of a political desire for differentiation from the authority monopolising power over the issue or space in question. Elden and Brenner affirm that Lefebvre viewed *autogestion* "as a form of direct democracy, a grassroots political practice that 'is born spontaneously out of the void in social life that is created by the state'" (Brenner & Elden, 2009:16). Lefebvre's use of the term needs to be contextualized within his work on the state in the 1960s and 70s, specifically calling for an alternative to the trend he was observing towards commodification and productivism. Brenner and Elden note that in his work *De l'État*, Lefebvre is rather specific on the characteristics that such alternatives ought to strive for: "development instead of growth; a politics of difference instead of state-imposed abstraction, homogeneity, and consumerism; and radical grassroots democracy, or autogestion, instead of technocracy and ruling class hegemony" (2009:4). Huchzermeyer notes how Lefebvre also stresses "the creative as opposed to [the] productive" in his work (2013:7), something that may be also used to distinguish *autogestion* from merely 'self-help' endeavours. While the latter has clearly a utilitarian outcome that may well be measured in terms of modernist criteria (e.g. how many plots of land were delivered, how well built were the houses), the former entails questions about the process; its qualities, its rhythms, and the room for 'creative play'. Without the existence of the latter, the possibility of *autogestion* wanes.

Today, there are various practices on the ground that respond to the call of *autogestion*. The Habitat International Coalition (HIC), a network of organisations working on socio-spatial issues from the human rights perspective, has documented various 'autogestive' processes that they use to exemplify 'social production of habitat' (HIC, 2004). I have organised some of the characteristics laid out in their compilation in a table (see Table 2 Practice-based definitions of autogestion). Across these practices, the common denominator is "the organised struggle for the land, housing and basic services" (Ortiz, 2004). The proponents of the term furthermore observe differences between those

practices in early and ‘more advanced stages’; one indicator of these ‘advanced stages’, is when groups start to promote their own activities and encourage further the potential of their members. The benefits of the projects that HIC documents are not only the actual attainment of land, housing and/or basic services, but “strengthening of autonomy, awareness of the commons and an increased level of self-esteem and confidence of members [...] particularly women” (2004). Proponents of these processes argue that what is actually built are not merely plots and houses, but “cities and citizenship, strengthening of popular economies and reconstitution of social fabric” (2004). *Autogestion* in this sense, is a term apprehended in an inductive direction; stemming out of popular practice and with many nuances that may not necessarily befit the clarity of the concepts by Lefebvre.

Table 2 Practice-based definitions of autogestion

The following questions find an answer with the experiences of HIC members.

What is being self-managed?	What is being countered?	What are the challenges?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Production of food > Water supply > Production, improvement, and/or management of habitat > Defence, promotion and/or realisation of human rights > Production or distribution of goods or services, in some cases for the good of the collective > Health, education, security services > Counselling > Civic and recreational activities > Political activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Marginalisation > Social and spatial segregation > Lack of access to social goods and services > Lack of spaces for negotiation > Imposed technocratic solutions > Dispossession > Privatisation > Deprivation of freedom in terms of habitat > Lack of support mechanisms for self-organisation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Bureaucracy > Political manipulation/co-option > Authoritarianism > Disregard > Fear > Rejection of social organisations > Lack of continuity of (local and central) government > Corruption > Lack of access to information > Mismatch between political and social timeframes

Cases taken from experiences in HIC (2004).

Autogestion can be furthermore linked to the self-help debates in the second half of the 20th Century, in the sense that both have at the centre a focus on the nature of inhabitant’s role in the processes in question. It is worth mentioning how within debates on self-help some have warned that without some form of progressive setup or politics, self-help housing can become a process that “individualizes potential gains, separates people from each other and

impedes collective and solidarity actions” (Harms, 1982:49). Harms observes that self-help can simply provide “dominant groups with a chance to appear liberal (not repressing self-initiatives but promoting them) and at the same time allocating very few resources to an operation in which the lowest paid people had to pull themselves by their own bootstraps out of a situation of misery” (1982:49); he then concludes that self-help requires “a democratization and decentralisation of management and direct participation or control by the housing users not only in the procedures of administration and allocation, but also in planning, design, and maintenance” (1982:48). Harms’ observations align with the concept of autogestion, but may also at times appear to critique co-production. While during the time that Lefebvre was writing on *autogestion* the concept of co-production was not yet in use, he does mention that “[t]he principle of *autogestion* entails the refusal of ‘co-management’ [*co-gestion*] through an economic apparatus, a planning bureaucracy” as “[i]t is incompatible with the relapse into capitalism that occurs when the ‘workers’ are accorded a share that is then quickly denied to them” (Lefebvre, 2009:148). In other words, under a generally oppressive frame, the ‘co-management’ that Lefebvre notes appears as merely a trick to dissuade ‘workers’ (or the constituency in question) momentarily, as the resource that may appear to be gained at some point is thereafter taken away. Some authors explicitly contrast the notion of *autogestion* to that of representative democracy (Ronneberger, 2009:89). *Autogestion* is therefore not merely a democratic practice, but an act of self-determination which, in its deliberative moments, may include democracy as a recourse but is not only limited to this. At the same time, it is also not clear whether democracy is a prerequisite for co-production to take place; as recent literature document the existence of such in contexts that have more authoritarian tendencies or are virtually one-party states (see ‘recent understandings on co-production’ earlier in this section). The precise differences between ‘social production of habitat’, co-production, *autogestion*, and self-help housing, may be more or less observable depending on the position of the observer, on the specific component of the practice being assessed, as well as on the overall context where the practices in questions are situated. An additional aspect to consider here is that the position of the observer may be chosen and, therefore, a political act. I therefore propose to engage in this debate based on the observations garnered from the practices I document below.

2.2.2. The state and local government

“The state [...] is not a bloc, it is a field”

(Bourdieu, 2014[1990]:20)

Discussing the changing nature of the state is fundamental to understand the relationships between the parties in socio-spatial production. Chambers’ notions of ‘normal professionalism’ and ‘normal bureaucracy’ see large institutions (e.g. governments) as hierarchical, compartmentalised, procedural, and ultimately self-serving in nature (1992:31). What is relevant to note is that he does not condemn bureaucracy or professionalism as such, but only when it acts in a ‘normal’ way. Here is an example of performative nature: the possibility of a government to act as state, but also retreat into its institutional ‘normal bureaucracy’. Another compelling conceptualisation of the state is that which proposes to see it as *a space*. Bourdieu has come to understand the state as “a space structured according to oppositions linked to specific forms of capital with differing interests” (Bourdieu, 2014 [1990]:20). ‘Capital’ in this context reads as *social capital*, which is negotiated politically between parties; as well as within factions within a state. As Ferguson and Gupta have argued, “states are not simply functional bureaucratic apparatuses, but powerful sites of symbolic and cultural production that are themselves always culturally represented and understood in particular ways” (Ferguson & Gupta, 2002:981). States may therefore ‘not simply’ be bureaucratic institutions, but they *can* certainly be. Without delving further into debates about the state, I raise these debates to exemplify the performative nature of the state.

The role of the state in Africa has considerably changed from ‘its beginnings’ up to the fluid situation that exists today vis-à-vis the increasing scale of ‘the informal’. Lonsdale observes how the first studies in political science in Africa tended to see “state formation as achievement” (1981:139). These early writers that Lonsdale refers to, likely having in mind institutions in the ‘Global North’, referenced institutions in the Global South as ‘imperfectly formed’, ‘states-in-information’, or ‘weak’. However, these discussions were taking place in the second half of the 20th Century when internationally the state’s role was ironically being reduced to that of ‘enabler’ (see 2.3.2 below). Therefore, while some scholars were calling

to 'bring the state back in' to political analyses in the Global North (Evans, Rueschemeyer & Skocpol, 1985), others, referring to the context of Africa, asked: "[s]hould theorists be 'bringing the state back in' to theory precisely when African political leaders, to the applause of international donors and bankers, are 'taking the state back out' of the economic policy arena?" (Bratton, 1989:408). This is important for the socio-spatial policy field, because "much of the literature discussion on co-production is based within the context of a weak and reducing state" (Mitlin, 2008:6). The fast growth of 'the informal' as a *mode* of urbanisation may, therefore, be linked to the 'liberalisation' of the role of governments. Rakodi observes that "the large scale of non-compliance [in land delivery formal procedures], in the face of limited public sector capacity and the need to maintain political support, leads governments to adopt a strategy of accommodation rather than conflict" (Rakodi, 2006a:278) which is contrary to the way in which informality is associated with the stronger regulation of 'informal' land (Toulmin and Quan, 2004). While her research shows how informal processes deliver more in the socio-spatial field than the formal ones that are commonly associated with the state, the changing nature of the situation seem to increasingly depend less on 'central state' and more in other 'peripheral' actors, as we will now see.

An additional component to the debates on the state is the question of local government. Bourdieu notes a tendency to form hierarchies when discussing power in terms of levels of governance:

"in the minds of all high officials, there is the central and the local. We discover here one of the key questions of a whole sociology: central/peripheral, central/local... the answer comes automatically in the form of taxonomies. The central is the state" (Bourdieu, 2014 [1990]:17-18).

From the historical perspective in Sub-Saharan Africa, Coquery-Vidrovitch notes how "in almost every case, the colonial African cities suffered from the absence of formal municipal institutions which would be relevant to their experience and would facilitate political local-level participation" (1991:53). Key to this is the framing of local government as a determinant for the practice of democracy at the local level, a matter that emerges as

crucial when dealing with the nature of the production of space. In places with a longer tradition of local government, there has been a recent drive for cities to ‘take a seat at the global table’ of decision making (Global Task Force, 2016). While local government in the Sub-Saharan African context may still not yet be at the point of demonstrating the agency shown by the local governments with a longer municipal tradition, I raise these observations to situate the discussion on the role of the state within a pathway of increased relevance of local governments at the global scale.

2.2.3. Inhabitants and the grassroots: levels of social organisation

In political science, the concepts of ‘civil society’ and ‘social movements’ have been employed to denote grassroots forces. In the case of Africa, Allen traces the debates on ‘civil society’ in the 1990s, and observes how the definitions invariably employ ‘the state’ as a concept to outline what ‘civil society’ is not (1997). Some discuss that ‘civil society’ has to be in opposition to the state (Bayart, 2009), while others argue that civil society precisely forms to reach ‘up’ to the state (Harbeson, Rothchild & Chazan, 1994). Others refer to ‘social movements’ as a fundamental factor in the democratisation in the African continent (Mamdani & Wamba-dia-Wamba, 1995). In these analyses, ‘civil society’ and ‘social movements’ may have more to do with the categories outlined by Castells (1983) or Della Porta & Diani (2009), who focus on modalities of action opposing an authority or power, and less so on alliances between these and the state. Bebbington and others instead offer a general definition of social movements as “a process of mobilisation that is sustained across time and space, rather than a specific organisation”, and crucially, they note that their intention with formulating such broad definition is to be able to include “the more nebulous, uncoordinated, and cyclical forms” of association (2009:7). Already in the 1990s, Mabogunje noted how in Sub-Saharan Africa, policy-making was “no longer the monopoly of governments” (Mabogunje, 1994:41), suggesting how the activity of *governing*, specifically in socio-spatial issues, was already a shared activity between parties; including the grassroots. Others like Lindell and Utas (2012) have documented ‘networked life’ in different cities in East and West Africa, and tracing the way in which different groups mobilise to sustain life in urban areas without necessarily resorting to divisions between

them and the government. This fluidity across divisions is something that others have observed with regards to smaller-scale participatory projects, particularly with regards to accommodating ‘messiness’, which is defined as “the complex and irresolvable politics of interaction” which are “brief moments, transient interfaces, and situated connections” that, by embracing ‘messiness’, therefore hold “potential to cross space, place, and time in unforeseeable ways” (Askins & Pain, 2011:809). We can at this point make a distinction between debates stressing the opposition between ‘the state’ and ‘social movements’, and those that focus more on how these and other parties collaborate.

The socio-spatial realm is a fertile field to further debate possible frames for these new collaborative forms of governance. Rakodi simply refers to the counter-parts of the State as *non-state social actors* (2006a), while Watson notes how some authors compound NGOs within the same category as ‘autonomous societal groups’ (2002). In Rakodi, the state is so central that she describes the administration (e.g. drafting agreements) and some service-provision activities of the grassroots as ‘mimicking the state’ (Rakodi, 2006a). However, it is perhaps this acquaintance with the bureaucratic workings of institutions that allow the grassroots to understand government institutions and engage with them on a more equal footing. On the other hand, Watson observes how the relations between parties can acquire more of a patron-client nature rather than actual co-production (2002:35-36). Castán Broto and Neves Alves recognise how also co-production can enhance local inequities and be therefore disempowering (2018). Cornwall, after elaborating on Arnstein’s ‘ladder of participation’² (1969), Pretty’s ‘typology of participation’³ (1995), and White’s ‘typology of interests (in participation)’⁴ (1996), notes that “all of the forms and meanings of participation [...] may be found in a single project or process, at different stages” (2008:273-274). While employing mainly ‘Global North’ references, Mayer (2010) outlines an evolution of the relationship between the grassroots and local government in particular. In short, she describes how 1960s social mobilisations were followed by a kind of ‘dialogue’ between movements and the authority in question (often local government) in the following

² Consisting of a degree, from lower to higher participation: non participation (therapy, manipulation), tokenism (placation, informing, consultation), and citizen power (partnership, delegated power, citizen control).

³ Consisting of a degree, from lower to higher participation: manipulative participation, passive participation, participation by consultation, participation for material incentives, functional participation, interactive participation, and self-mobilization.

⁴ Consisting of a degree, from lower to higher participation: nominal, instrumental, representative, and transformative.

decades, which subsequently resulted in an institutionalisation of movements or in mobilisers joining the ranks of the parties they had originally opposed. Outlining the usefulness of this trajectory for the case of Sub-Saharan Africa remains an outstanding task to which my research is aiming to partly contribute.

Holston writes of 'insurgent citizenship' to denote a kind of challenge to an established notion of 'citizenship'. Such 'insurgent citizenship' comes out of producing a new kind of city -the informal settlements- and defending it. The movements that Holston describes in Brazil are more confrontational in nature simply due to their experiences gained throughout the decades in which informal settlements have been in existence in this context. He does refer to Lefebvre to account on how his writings indeed foresaw an 'urban revolution', but notes that this was not in the way that he may have anticipated, but in ways that may be "nativist, racist, communalist, and elitist" (2009:248). He does not idealise nor demonise life in informal settlements, but focuses on it to argue that "the sites of metropolitan innovation often emerge at the very sites of metropolitan degradation" (2009:249). From the planning perspective, Miraftab writes on insurgent planning, and discusses 'citizen participation' in an overall neoliberal context (2009). She exemplifies 'insurgent planning' in groups such as the Western Cape Anti-Eviction Campaign in South Africa, which directly and actively challenge local government's motions causing displacement. She refers to spaces of 'invited' and 'invented' action, to refer to those forms of neoliberal participation enabled by authorities ("dominance through inclusion" (Miraftab, 2009:32)) for the former, and spaces of more radical challenges for the latter. While 'invited' spaces are generally favoured and "legitimized by donors and government interventions", the 'invented' spaces are "those collective actions by the poor that directly confront authorities and challenge the status quo" (Miraftab, 2009:38-39). However, Miraftab collapses several components into one, as it could be possible for spaces for collective action to be created independently ('invented') while not necessarily challenging authorities but *reversing* the 'invitation': i.e. the poor summoning the authority for co-production. What both Holston and Miraftab may also inadvertently be doing, is to segregate a kind of citizenship ('insurgent citizenship') and a form of planning ('insurgent planning') to a discrete geographical area (the informal settlement) or social group (the poor). Swyngedouw employs the term 'insurgent architects' to refer to the radical movements that emerged in the eve of the Arab spring, offering a

scathing critique to ‘incipient urban politicisation’ and calling for a ‘return to the political’ through radically re-thinking and ‘designing’ what would it mean to being-in-common beyond ‘elite fantasies’ (2015). Discourses on co-production, perhaps far from Swyngedouw’s observations and differently from the tenets of Holston and Miraftab, speak instead about bringing different parties together and engage into some form of cooperation and substantive agreement.

2.3. Thematic field: land rights and the production of housing

I focus on the fields of land and housing as a way to locate the discussion on the debates above in a thematic field. It is here that I provide two ‘fields’ to observe their workings: land rights and the production of housing. For the first, I outline some of the debates that take place with respect to land ownership, disassociating between tenure and rights. For the second, I outline a trajectory of debates on housing, situating the practices below within a historical process that has now come a long way and yet remaining in effect ‘a question’.

2.3.1. Land rights

While the issue of ‘land’ may be traditionally associated to spaces used for agrarian purposes, it is increasingly a common practice to see urban and rural land issues as interrelated. There is a temporal continuity associated with the appearance of urban areas from agrarian and/or pastoral uses of space to ‘urban’ ones (e.g. cities, infrastructure, industry). However, in today’s ‘explosion/implosion’ of spaces (Brenner, 2014), one can find agricultural activities within urban areas, as well as rural households equipped with much of the infrastructure commonly associated with urban living. Despite such differentiations, a common thread in these discussions remains the issue of land rights.

Many of the debates on ‘land’ have focused predominantly on *property*, more specifically *private property*. Titling as a way to ‘release’ the commercial value of land dominated

debates at the turn of the 21st Century, but experienced researchers on socio-spatial issues have warned on the limits of land titling and home ownership (Payne, Durand-Lasserve & Rakodi, 2009). They unpack some of the more common beliefs that lead development efforts to focus on titling as a form to secure tenure, accessing finance, and other developmental objectives. Titling, particularly in the developmental debates, has a 'double agenda': "[o]n the one hand, it seeks to improve tenure security for residents in informal settlements [or circumstances], whilst on the other hand it attempts to increase security for domestic and international investors promoting economic development" (Durand-Lasserve et al., 2007:8). It is therefore not surprising that land ownership has been the subject of attention of some of the world's most powerful institutions, which have considerable leverage to influence the way in which the issue is apprehended. Durand-Lasserve et al quote Quan (2003) to note that "[t]he World Bank played a dominant and overarching role in land policy in developing countries during the 2nd half of the 20th Century" (2007:8). Being a bank, and therefore having lending as its main tool, the institution has traditionally supported projects "to modernise and strengthen systems of land administration" (2007:8). However, seasoned practitioners in land tenure focused in the Global South are conclusive in that titling only works as a strategy when the demand and the supply are in certain equilibrium (Payne, 2004). When the demand far outstrips the supply, disproportionate pressures fall in a land title; therefore enhancing associated risks, which are particularly present in lower income groups. Hence, the discussion on titling as a strategy to ensure land rights for the poor becomes less relevant.

It is important to note that in the case of Sub-Saharan Africa, various modes of land rights coexist; the vast majority of which are in 'the informal'. Mabogunje notes how in Sub-Saharan Africa, half of the countries have abolished private property altogether at some stage in the 20th century (1990). While in many cases this was afterwards reversed, it is nevertheless a relevant indication of rejection of an imposed one-sided definition of ownership. In South Africa, notions of 'family homes', where ownership is collectively understood, challenge Westernised notions of property predicated on individualised notions of 'one person, one property, one title' (van Schalkwyk, forthcoming). This also questions notions that interpret the 'continuum of land rights' (GLTN, 2015) in a way that assume that 'freehold tenure' is made to be the ultimate goal of such 'continuum', towards which every

other scheme should eventually be gravitating to. It is estimated that “[b]etween half of three quarters of all new housing in sub-Saharan African cities is built on land that has been supplied through processes that, in one way or another, do not comply with formal legal requirements related to subdivision, transfer and development control” (Rakodi, 2006:127). This has been recognised by ‘the formal’, but despite ‘easy-to-use’ and ‘pro-poor’ tools that have been devised by large multi-lateral organisations (GLTN, 2017), their implementation remains limited and most innovation seems to be taking place within ‘the informal’ (Cotula, Toulmin & Hesse, 2004). In their comparative study on informal land delivery processes in five African cities (2003), Rakodi and Leduka documented how most of the land for urban development is supplied through channels that are alternative to what is considered to be ‘formal’. While they acknowledge how these processes are often shunned by authorities, they also highlight their virtues; key to these are their “practical attributes and their social legitimacy” (Rakodi, 2006:130). Leduka makes a further distinction between social legitimacy and trust, arguing that the former is a common understanding of rules regulating transactions, while trust arises only after rules have been complied with (2006). Both of which are crucial in a context where various systems for transacting land are in operation.

Although there is no consensus, scholars have arrived at a number of general conclusions with regards to land rights in the Global South. Firstly, it is recognised that the issue of land rights is not a matter of ‘bridging’ a purported ‘gap’ between ‘the formal’ and ‘the informal’, but rather a matter of resolving “a ‘mismatch’ between different systems that co-exist” (Royston, 2013:48). Secondly, there are concrete ways to identify whether a policy will be in actual favour of lowest income groups. Focusing on ‘the informal’ side of land delivery, Rakodi proposes six criteria for evaluating whether a ‘mechanism’ is pro-poor: scale (i.e. sufficient volume), cost, security of tenure, access to disadvantaged groups, service provision, and socially-legitimate dispute resolution capacities (2007:5). Thirdly, the role of the state in land transactions is manifold and can (and arguably should) change according to the circumstance. Napier, reflecting on the role of the state, identifies its different roles in urban ‘land markets’ (2013): regulating land, leading future spatial planning, calling financial institutions to account, legislating tenure form, and keeping land registers and cadastres; and in some cases, remaining a large landowner for the public good. Fourthly, perceived forms of tenure can be as strong as formal systems and yield the social benefits of secure

tenure. Payne (2004) explains how relatively simple measures can trigger the benefits associated with land tenure without the need of complex bureaucratic operations. He shows how the provision of public infrastructure within informally-tenured plots (e.g. by improving roads or installing public lighting), has proven to enhance the confidence of households, and thus incentivising improvement in living conditions by inhabitants themselves. This is why he elsewhere asks whether the key issue in land tenure debates is that of titles or of rights (Payne, 2000). He furthermore distinguishes between tenure status and land rights, noting how it is possible to have a wide range of land rights (e.g. to sell, inherit, cultivate) with little tenure security (i.e. non-freehold titles); and also theoretically the other way around. While the issues of land ownership and mechanisms to secure tenure listed here are not the final word on the matter, it lays bare that the wide array of possibilities available today in terms of land rights.

2.3.2. The production of housing

Historically, housing became a matter of the state as a result of social struggle. One of the key moments in which the fields of housing and the state intersected was the passing of the Dutch Housing Act of 1901 (Stieber, 1998). This moment marked a transition when housing passed from being a matter of private charity to one of public welfare. Before this point, housing for the lowest income groups was a concern of charities set up by wealthy elites and religious organisations; or simply left to private speculators providing dwellings for those who could afford. However, with industrialisation, growth of towns and cities, and with a significant participation of labour movements, the housing question shifted to the public realm. During the 20th Century, a number of key housing projects emerged throughout Europe, the United States, and later on in the Global South. The post-war period gave rise to various kinds of welfare states that adopted a modernist logic based on order, hygiene, clarity, and efficacy, as a distinct break from the conditions of the pre-war period. Public housing thrived in this environment, and in more or less a successful manner, states managed to provide shelter for millions around the world. The critique to this model can be shared with the critique to the modern logic, which Adorno and Horkheimer articulated in the 'Dialectic of the Enlightenment' (2002). The clear and wide-spread 'benefits' and

progress offered by the modernity of 'enlightenment' would be accompanied by a dialectic 'other' with darker consequences.

Welfare paradigms gave way to the rise of liberal democracies under the credo of neoliberalism. The term bears the prefix 'neo' as the proponents of the term consider it a new iteration of the liberalism that was proposed by Adam Smith in 1776. Liberal propositions predicate a retreat of the State based on the premise that markets would achieve a balance through their own workings (Harvey, 2007). In the realm of housing, policies based on capital subsidies largely aimed at benefiting the private sector were developed for the Global South with considerable American influence and support (Gilbert, 2002); the aim was largely to secure public support despite the general neoliberal turn that economic thinking was making at the time. The document that marked a key turn in this sequence was the 1993 World Bank report titled "Housing: Enabling Markets to Grow" (World Bank, 1993). The document laid out commercial-based approaches to housing and assigned the state the clear role of 'enabler'. Both neoliberalism and its associated housing policies, were afterwards exported to various parts of the world (Brenner, Peck & Theodore, 2010), including South Africa in the 1990s (Gilbert, 2000). Up to the 1990s, Mabogunje observed in Sub-Saharan Africa how "[e]ach approach [to housing] represented a downgrading of the state's role relative to the former period until the present when this is limited to simply providing and managing infrastructure" (1990:143). While debates on 'neoliberalism' abound, the term is here only raised as a way to frame the transition of the role the state particularly in the delivery of social services; including housing.

It was also during the middle of the 20th Century that 'self-help' housing propositions would flourish, triggering significant debates on policy and practice. Harris notes that 'self-help' arose in Europe and the Soviet Union after World War I as "a pragmatic, untheorized, response to severe housing shortages and political unrest" (1999:282); in Latin America, self-help housing options were already practiced in the first half of the 20th Century (Sociedad de Arquitectos Mexicanos & Colegio Nacional de Arquitectos de México, 1958) and others argue that "*de facto* self-help housing" has existed in South Africa since the colonial regimes had to deal with the question of housing of indigenous people in urban areas (Parnell & Hart, 1999:368). However, it was perhaps the writings of John Turner in the

1960s and 70s about the 'freedom to build' that had the widest impact on disseminating the call to 'allow' inhabitants to build shelter on their own (Turner & Fichter, 1972). He did so at a time (and in a way) that coincided with the neoliberal call to relinquish state-led matters to the markets. The call was for the practice of housing to be left to inhabitants themselves. Based on his observations in Latin America, and then in his native England, he arrived at the conclusion that the practice of 'housing people' would not be led by experts or bureaucrats, but inhabitants themselves. While some argued that Turner was confusing 'freedom' with 'necessity' (Harms, 1982) or merely dealing with housing as a 'petty commodity' ready to enter circulation in the (capitalist) mode of production (Burgess, 1978), others saw his writings as a watershed in the housing question (Ward, 1991). A rich debate unfolded around the concept of 'self-help housing' (Ward, 1982; Math  y, 1992). While these questions continue to have currency, it can be also said that not every 'self-help' housing intervention taking place today bears with the memory of these trajectories. Therefore, one can expect various forms of interpretation and implementation coexisting today, even if they incur into some of the practices that others have criticised based on previous experience.

The focus on informal settlements and the relative failure of housing interventions and policy (or, as Ward would put it, the "total bankruptcy of housing policy in all countries rich or poor" (1991:10)), was met with a general global economic crisis in which new market 'frontiers' were sought to satisfy capital's need for compound growth. In 2007, the housing question was the centre stage of planetary attention during the global financial crisis, which had its epicentre in the housing realm. The crisis was due to complex speculation with mortgages in the American housing market, particularly when lending was enabled for households that were not able to service the financial product (hence, the prefix 'sub' in the sub-prime mortgage) (Aalbers, 2009). While some continue advocating the 'scaling up' of housing finance to reach the 'under-served' (Hoek-Smit, 2012; Rust, 2015), others have warned about the dangers of further spreading already over-stretched commercial housing finance models to 'the South' (Soederberg, 2015). The overemphasis on housing finance was addressed in a 2012 report by the United Nations Special Rapporteur on adequate housing, which strongly criticized the dominance of housing finance as the preferred method to enable access to housing, particularly for low-income groups (UN, 2012). The

report highlights the notion of ‘financialisation of housing’, and the adverse effects of commodified approaches to housing production. At this point, critiques to the neoliberal model were not anymore a call from activist groups or grassroots organisations, but a discussion in mainstream platforms.

While widely discredited after the various experiences in the past century, modernist state-led ‘mass housing’ efforts, sub-prime practices, and displacement of the poorest to give way to higher-end developments, continue to take place in various contexts. However, alternative forms of grassroots finance, cooperative housing developments, and other processes that aim to promote the production of housing through a non-speculative process -all of which had also been present throughout this journey- have re-emerged as feasible alternatives to the current pathways. There is a body of work that propose to understand the need of finance, particularly for housing, from a bottom-up perspective and as a device for collective life. In the views of state interventions failing to make an impact among the lowest income groups, savings-based organisations emerged giving way to a kind of ‘bottom-up’ finance different from the kind of micro-finance that has grown also across the Global South. Those observing these processes focus on the work of federated savings groups mainly in Africa and Asia where the aims are less centred on access to credit than on urban transformation as a whole (Mitlin, Colenbrander & Satterthwaite, 2018).

Furthermore, there are currently also propositions that demonstrate to have assimilated many of the lessons outlined above, assigning different roles for the State, local authorities, and inhabitants particularly in the Global South (King et al., 2017). However, recognition does not necessarily result in implementation; and there are still considerable gaps even in the most recent global policy efforts placing ‘housing at the centre’ (ICSU, 2016; Observatorio Habitat III, 2016; Huchzermeyer, 2017). While these lessons and many other seemingly progressive tenets are all included in the ‘New Urban Agenda’ that was agreed upon at the Habitat III conference in 2016 (UN, 2017a), the struggle to significantly transform approaches to housing remain a pressing task.

3. Research Methodology

“every practice produces a theory”

(Cabral, 1966)

3.1. Introduction: what are these cases a case of?

For my research, the unit of analysis is *the practice*. To undertake this task, I employ mainly qualitative methods. Qualitative research is “of specific relevance to the study of social relations” (Flick 2011:12), and I propose to understand these practices precisely as social relations. The methodology is informed by the conceptual framework outlined above (see 2.1 above), and is discussed in a more direct way below (see 3.2 below). The focus is on *the way* that matters unfolded. I took this decision based on the gaps that exist in studies on land and housing, particularly focused in the case of Namibia, where the actual nature of process, how matters unfolded, is often neglected (see 4.2.4 below). Some authors agree that the unit of analysis in case studies can be “a system of actions and relations” (Duminy, Odendaal & Watson, 2014:32). Therefore, rather than focusing on the actors, the institutions, the policy or legislation, the material aspects, ‘the house’, or ‘the land’, what seemed crucial to me was to privilege the processes that mobilise and animate all of these components. These processes are what I describe here as *practices*, which for the particular purpose of my study are focused on the issues of land and housing production.

3.2. Theoretical background

In this section I attempt to situate the methodological choices of my project in both historical and geographical contexts. I furthermore attempt to weave the current chapter within the theoretical framework outlined in the Literature Review (see 2.1 above, in particular Figure 3 Timeline). As mentioned in the previous section, a practice-centred approach puts emphasis on the agency of social interactions; this in turn requires certain methodological decisions. I therefore give prominence to the voices of the actors involved,

rather than to the structures that under other more functionalist frames would yield an institutional analysis. As will be explained below, this is achieved through narratives captured through in-depth semi-structured interviews and supported by other methods for triangulation purposes. However, what is relevant to set out in this section is how this decision also stems from the theoretical underpinnings of my project. It is also important to spell out the limits of this approach. For instance, my study does not aim to give in-depth anthropological or cultural insights of those involved in the practices. It is also not the purpose to reveal behavioural patterns or make normative statements about the nature of human agency or the cultural meaning of 'land' and 'housing' in the particular context of contemporary Namibia. What I am interested in documenting is *what happened* in the three cases I have chosen from a practice-centred viewpoint and with the particular focus on the attainment of land rights and the production of housing. The methodology, therefore, speaks directly to the theoretical aim of moving beyond modernist-positivist-structuralist paradigms while still considering key structural aspects in the accounts. I propose to achieve this by giving prominence to the sequence of events as accounted for by the ones who inhabited the practices.

The very way in which qualitative research has developed (in the Global North) reveals a sequence that shows also a gradual shift in the theoretical paradigms in the background. In their history of qualitative inquiry, Denzin and Lincoln (2005) place modernist research anchored on positivist motivations as the very first stage. In these early moments, which took place in the 1970s in the U.S., qualitative research was tightly structured and deeply concerned with issues of validity. However, the following phases show an 'explosion' of possibilities in research, where genres were 'blurred', a 'crisis of representation' took place, and other fundamental questions about the way research was undertaken shook many of the assumptions of the modernist period. In the case of the Global South, I see the various phases that these and other authors observe (Vidich & Lyman, 1994) taking place at the same time. While some of the current research is mechanically structured and aimed at delivering results in the modernist tradition, others have focused on more sociological or cultural analyses rendered invisible by previous research practices. The methodological diversity in which research in Southern Africa takes place today has been documented by Pieterse and Parnell (2016), revealing the openings that a distinct Global South research

agenda might entail. Taking the observations on methods from Global South-based researchers (Eagle, Hayes & Sibanda, 2006; Duminy et al., 2014), it can be said that the need to incorporate local needs and issues, and matching these with the conditions and resources available, creates a field for methodological innovation. While being aware of the baggage that each methodological choice bears, I argue that such innovation should be sufficiently astute to draw what it may require from the available resources; which is something that I try to practise here.

3.3. The role of the process within the methodology in socio-spatial research

To exemplify the issues of methodology in socio-spatial research, I draw from the discussions of methods in housing research. The discussion on methodology in housing research has until now had an overt focus on understanding the ‘housing market’. The mention of methodology in housing requires specific attention, as it is inherently a transdisciplinary matter. Two key historical references in this respect are the edited volumes by Tipple and Willis (1991) and Jones and Ward (1994), which emerged out of the need to strengthen the methodological qualities of the empirical information on housing that was available at that time (which, already then, was significant). The former volume tried to present the various approaches to housing-related inquiry, ranging from cultural change analysis of the Tswana in Southern Africa (Rapoport & Hardie, 1991) to econometric analyses on the impact of rent controls in urban housing markets in Ghana (Struyk & Turner, 1991). The latter volume debates whether employing a classical or a political economic model is the more appropriate for studying housing, which relates to the debates between Burgess and Turner in the preceding decades (see 2.3.2 above), as well as Rakodi’s analysis of research on housing markets in the 1990s (1992). In neither debate does the process itself figure as a central component in the analyses. I nevertheless apply the term socio-spatial production in a dialectical way; material spaces producing social relationships and vice versa (for an elaboration on this, see 2.1.1 above). It is only recently that *the mode* in which the housing process (or other socio-spatial processes) takes place has received

increased attention, particularly with the debates on co-production (Mitlin, 2008; Watson, 2014) and social production of habitat (Ortiz & Zárate, 2004).

3.4. The usefulness of case study as a method for socio-spatial inquiry

Case study has been identified as a “particularly important approach” (Duminy & Watson, 2014:247) to engage with socio-spatial inquiry owing to its emphasis on accounting in depth on the process, putting emphasis on the importance of context, and holding potential for eventual theorisation ‘from the South’. The authors of the Association of African Planning Schools (AAPS) Case Research Toolkit (AAPS 2011), maintain that for socio-spatial practitioners, more specifically planners, it is crucial to understand the details of the process on the ground in order to draw lessons from local experiences. This is fundamental in the particular case of Sub-Saharan Africa, where the post-colonial context remains determined by inherited colonial-modern guidelines for producing space, but it is not only limited by it. This requires re-appropriation to suit contemporary needs, which in turn requires a nuanced understanding of the situation on the ground. While cases can be useful for a rather utilitarian approach (i.e. the formulation of a government programme), the cases presented in this study aim to go beyond this and engage with theory.

The debate on the usefulness of case study as a way to produce theory continues to be contentious. While textbooks may caution readers against generalising from one individual case, there are Southern African researchers who contend that this is in fact “incorrect” (AAPS, 2011:8). They argue that the power of example is considerable in Sub-Saharan Africa, and that this can supplement the situation where locally-sourced literature on the issue at stake is not generally available. The authors go further and state elsewhere that more than generalising from a case study it “is often about making these findings the basis for action” (Duminy, Odendaal & Watson, 2014:36). At the same time, they recognise that while case research “does not allow findings and conclusions to be generalised to all other cases [...] it does allow generalisation to theory” (AAPS 2011:11). Others, like Stake, warn that “[d]amage occurs when the commitment to generalise or to theorise runs so strong that the

researcher's attention is drawn away from features important for understanding the case itself" (2005:448). George and Bennett also recognise the vulnerability of case studies regarding selection bias and representativeness (2005:22,30). However, Duminy et al. argue that more than 'generalisable', cases have the virtue of being 'relatable' and 'transferable' (2014:39), which may be more relevant features for the particular case of socio-spatial inquiry and practice in the Global South. Some argue that case studies sit at 'the bottom' of a 'naturalist hierarchy' in which 'experimental methods' lie at 'the top' (Moses & Knutsen, 2012:15-16). However, this placing of case studies as 'preliminary' or as part of some 'naturalist' hierarchy is largely based on the assumption that various other resources are available (e.g. funds, data) to be able to employ different methodologies. Therefore, the relevance of the case study method in the Global South should be situated within this context.

3.5. Case selection criteria

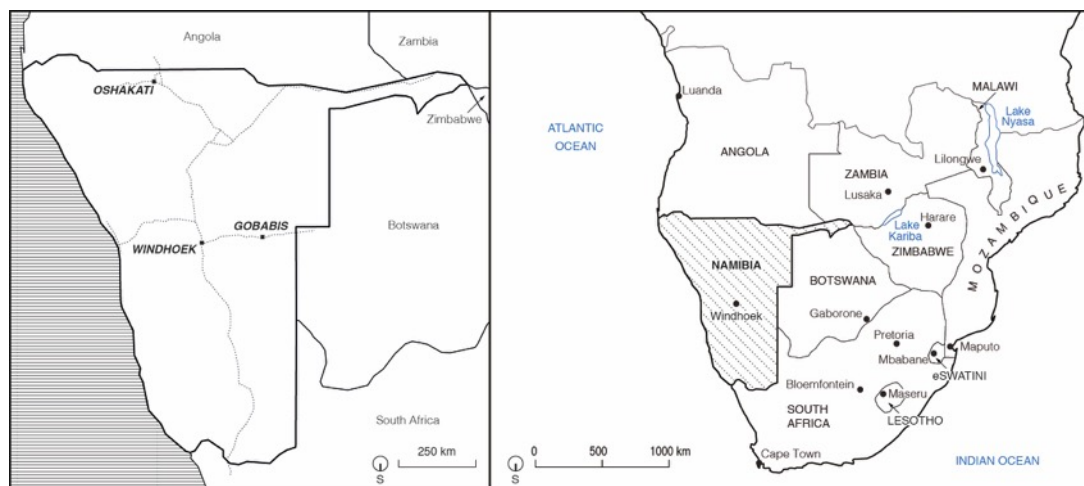


Figure 4 Map of Namibia with three cases indicated (left), and Namibia within Southern Africa (right).

The cases I present have a wide degree of variation, in terms of geography, but also in terms of the stakeholders involved, scale, and the nature of the process itself (see Annexure 2, in 9.1 below). I see this research as a collective case study, which may befit what some call 'multisite qualitative research'. Some define 'multisite qualitative studies' as those which "address the same research question in a number of settings using similar data collection

and analysis procedures in each setting” (Herriott & Firestone, 1983:14). In many cases, this is done for the purpose of comparison, which some see as “the opposite” (Stake, 2005:457) of what Geertz calls ‘thick descriptions’ (1973); a notion which is often invoked in relation to case studies. However, it is important to stress that my intention with incorporating three cases is not for comparative purposes, but rather to provide a wider frame to understand the nature socio-spatial practices today. Owing to the significant discrepancy in scale between the three cases, only one of the cases (Windhoek) has a scale manageable enough for one researcher to provide a fine-grained account and therefore be able to fit the notion of ‘thick description’. The other cases (Gobabis and Oshakati) are larger in scale and also vary with regards to the development stage in which they are situated. However, every effort was made to document the cases in a manner that would make analysis of the three together feasible.

The three cases are paradigmatic in different ways and from different viewpoints. Other cases that I started documenting in the early stages of my research process proved to be less layered, others were stalled or had reached an *impasse*, and others were simply difficult to approach. There were other good cases in Windhoek, but I favoured having geographical diversity; and while I also had the possibility of including other localities, eventually this would have required reducing the accounts of the three cases that I decided to focus on. In the case of Windhoek, the practice is one among dozens of others in the city⁵. However, local authorities (LAs) employees themselves, as well as other professionals with whom I have engaged during my research, regard this case as one of ‘the best’ current examples of inhabitants organising to access land and housing. During initial selection, I conducted exploratory interviews with other groups in Windhoek; however, the various interactions that these group had with other stakeholders deserved closer attention. In Oshakati, the case can be considered paradigmatic because according to one interviewee at the LA it is the only active grassroots-led land and housing process in town that has benefitted from land allocations from council, and it appears to be only the second time that a similar process has been actually implemented there since a donor-funded project in the mid-1990s

⁵ A City of Windhoek document titled ‘Independent Saving Group Profile’ lists 28 groups, but the assumption is that there should be others that escape the view of the municipality and/or have emerged since the count was made (the document is undated, but according to the Municipal community development worker, the work on this was done in the early 2000s).

(see 4.2.3 below). The case of Gobabis can be considered paradigmatic in the sense that it is the first time that an inhabitant-led process has started to take place in a 'city-wide' modality; i.e. taking not a single group or one block of land as the unit, but the settlement as a whole. For a 'best practice' documentation exercise, probably the case of Dibasen in Windhoek would have served the purpose. However, one single case would have given a partial view on the degree of variance that currently exists today in the socio-spatial realm in Namibia. This is not to say that only three cases suffice for this study to be representative of the *status quo* of inhabitant-led land and housing practices, but they certainly provide a wider notion of the range that this field of study can encompass.

Lastly, it is important to highlight that I have also selected the cases based on opportunities that presented themselves through my professional engagements in Namibia. This made it reasonably easy to access many stakeholders, to draw insights on the social and institutional context, and ultimately have a grounded view on how these cases were in their own way relevant vis-à-vis the other on-going socio-spatial processes. This has produced unevenness that may have impacted the overall accounts; however, I was more interested in garnering a variety of accounts rather than seeking representativity. The first interviewees in every case were current or former colleagues, and from there it was relatively straightforward to engage with other parties that were involved in the cases in question through snowball method until the point at which the information I was getting started to repeat itself. Practically, this also allowed me to become less of an 'outsider' that granted me an initial level of trust with various stakeholders, creating a conducive environment for frank assessments, reflections, and even sharing personal views beyond (and often conflicting with) the role that the accounting party performed in the process. This was not the case in every interview, but in the cases where the doors were widely opened, it is where I have gained highly valuable insights that have enriched the accounts I present below.

3.6. Methods within the case study

My research takes a predominantly narrative approach to account for the practices that I have studied. To undertake this, I conducted semi-structured in-depth interviews with the stakeholders involved. Here, interviews are regarded as “reality-constructing, meaning-making occasions” rather than an extractive process where respondents are “awaiting excavation” (Holstein & Gubrium, 1995:4). As I was interested in the narrative of the process, I asked the interviewees the basic question of ‘*what happened?*’ (see Guideline for interviews with households in Annexure 4, 9.3 below). On most occasions, respondents would actively reflect on the experience, rather than simply spelling out events and ‘facts’. I have followed what the authors of the AAPS Case Research Toolkit recommend: to “give respondents room to build their accounts in their own words” (AAPS, 2011:21). In most cases it was possible to record the interviews, which were transcribed verbatim; in some other cases, particularly where trust was not yet established, I resorted to writing down notes. I have then sent the notes and transcripts to respondents for comment and correction. Ethical considerations adhered to the University of Cape Town’s standards (see 3.7 below), and I obtained ethics clearance from the university to be able to conduct fieldwork. After the main interview had taken place, I sometimes resorted to telephonic interviews to verify or confirm some of the facts. Following Stake’s proposition that it is the responsibility of researchers, through analysis and triangulation, “to tease out what deserves to be called experiential knowledge from what is opinion and preference” (2005:445), I have strived to strike a balance between the account of events and the qualitative assertions that respondents have (often without any prompting) shared with me. I have also sought to collect diverse, often conflicting, narratives; and I reached out to sources I was sometimes discouraged by others to reach out to. Such disagreements can be read in the accounts below. When conflicting narratives could not be clarified through an additional source or document, I have restrained from privileging either and included both perspectives as they were reported.

To complement, and in some cases verify, the information obtained through the narratives, I gathered several documents for each case. Namibia differs from the ‘African context’ described by Duminy and others, where “written records of events do not always exist or are not easily available” (2014:36). In Namibia, official written records are reasonably well kept, and many documents are publicly available; some even accessible online. At the same

time, the processes that I document have a strong component of inhabitant-led activities, and it is here where the availability (and usefulness) of written records reaches its limits. However, even in these instances, I was able to obtain some documents, as some groups carefully stored their documents and were kind enough to share them with me. It was, therefore, not always possible to obtain similar or equivalent documentation for each of the cases. The fact that narratives constitute the bases of my research implicitly evokes the argument that oral evidence provides “a counterpoint to written documents [...] associated with and tainted by European colonialism” (Cordell, 2003:239). However, the narratives I gathered may have more to do with qualitative research interviewing (Wengraf, 2001) than with the tradition of oral history that has been influential in African history studies (Vansina, 1965). The combination of narratives and documents serves in both cases to build an archive of practices that are significant in the production of space in Namibia. I have interviewed twenty-two individuals, some of them two times and others three times or more; I have followed up with many respondents telephonically for clarification. These were NGO professionals, local government officials, informal settlement organisers, university lecturers, foreign cooperation agency professionals, government officials, and retired politicians. I include a mention of those who were interviewed in the introduction of each case in Chapter 5. .

I obtained maps, plans, aerial photographs, media articles, council meeting minutes, official communication and documents, as well as photographs which I took during my visits. This allowed for triangulation with the interviews, which in turn allowed me to produce a chronology of events, which I visualised as a timeline for each of the cases (see Annexure 3, 9.2 below). These are important as the chronology of events can be used to discuss the possible causal explanations, but my interest was nevertheless in accounting for the relations that were established. My intention was not to exhaust all possible causes for the events that I document here, but to find the various accounts that exist and highlight how they either coincide or differ. My actual aim is to present assertions based on the experience as accounted for by the participants in the practice, rather than explanations.

The methods I employ here offer possible openings for future research. The three practices that I document are rich in the number of events and interactions between participants, and

each is in a different 'development' stage. While some can be said to be ending (Windhoek), or somewhere in between (Gobabis and Oshakati), it can be safely said that none of the processes are completed. In fact, it is unclear what would actually constitute 'an end' to the processes. My research presents only 'a snapshot', and I recognise that new information might emerge and further events will take place, which may change the way the practices are understood. My plan is to consider the possibility of longitudinal studies as yielding valuable insights as Moser has done in Ecuador (2009), or the observations in time with regards to titling that Galiani and Schargrodsky have conducted in Chile (2016). While my project is mainly qualitative in nature, I recognise the possibility and value of future studies taking my research as a starting point, which may require quantitative data on the cases in question. For this, I have undertaken a survey for the case of Windhoek gathering socio-economic information on the Windhoek case; however, this information is contained in a separate report (Delgado, van Rooi & Namupala, forthcoming) and I don't refer to it in this document as it would create significant asymmetries considering that there's no similar information available for the other two cases.

3.7. Ethical considerations

To undertake this research, I had to seek approval every year with the Ethics in Research Committee at the Faculty of Engineering and the Built Environment. The following are the ethical aspects that I considered while undertaking my research:

Anonymity and confidentiality. I provided interviewees with the option on whether the interview ought to be documented anonymously or otherwise; confidentiality was provided in all cases. In my experience doing research in Namibia, there are respondents who prefer anonymity, but the larger number are strongly motivated by their situation or argument and are happy, even motivated, to be identified. I ensured confidentiality by not divulging any of their personal information and input during the process. This thesis focuses on roles and, therefore, is written in a way that does not require individual details to be disclosed; hence, the risk of exposing the identity of individuals is minimal.

Consent form. I provided interviewees with a consent form, which I include in Annexures (see 9.4 below).

Documentation. My research benefitted from documents that can be deemed sensitive (e.g. title deeds, municipal bills). Interviewees were able to decide on whether to disclose such information, but everyone generously accepted to disclose. I have made these documents anonymous by blocking names with photographic editing software, and afterwards deleting the original files. In this way, I will not be able to trace documents identifying single individuals. My research only employs publicly-available documents as sources. In the case of the maps that I used from the National Archives, it is a requirement for me to provide a copy of the final work as 'legal deposit' to the National Archives of Namibia according to the National Library Act No.4 of 2000. I pledge to honour this requirement when the time comes.

Archiving and use of the information. The full documentation of the research process will be kept digitally in a password-protected cloud drive only accessible to me. This will be kept safe during the research process and will remain so afterwards.

Characteristics of the interviewees. The cases for this research project were chosen to show a wide variation within the resources available. It is, however, important to note that the research does not aim at being representative of contemporary Namibian society. The main criteria for choosing the cases was that the practice as a whole served to show variance in the complex process of accessing housing and urban land in Namibia today. Therefore, criteria such as gender, race, class, were not relevant for the selection of interviewees.

Minors, minorities, disabilities. My research did not focus on particularly vulnerable groups, such as people with disabilities or child-headed households.

Potential harm. The main output of my research is the present document. The main audience is expected to be academic. At a later stage, I plan to present my work in Namibia; in which case, I will pay particular attention to not exposing individuals and/or making them traceable. I will be clear that the project is not intended to single out a particular individual

or institution, but rather to understand systemic conditions. Hence, the risk of any party to feel scrutinised is minimised.

De-briefing and feedback. When the interviewee agreed to and/or requested so, I have furnished her with a transcript of the interview that took place, as well as with the set of photographs that may have been used for the research. This is with the hope that the interviewee can rest assured that only that information that is in his/her possession has been employed for the research. In some cases, interviewees were reluctant to sign the consent forms and I have agreed to leave the form with them and wait until they feel ready to sign. After my work has been reviewed, I plan to produce a summarised version and circulate it among those that participated.

Credits and contributors. I have acknowledged as many individuals and institutions as possible in the Acknowledgments section. I have anonymised my sources of information and instead referred to them throughout the thesis as the role they perform.

Positionality. I acknowledge my privileged position as an academic that has had ample access to stakeholders and information. In a generally patriarchal society, being a male tends to enhance the privilege on my side. However, I have sought to mitigate this by engaging each party with utmost equality and respect. I also know some of the interviewees personally; however, I have engaged them in a professional way for the purpose of my research. Lastly, being a foreigner posed the danger of suspicion; this was nevertheless mitigated with the years I have spent in the country as well as occasionally disclosing to some of my colleagues my family relations in Namibia.

3.8. Methods of analysis

I have analysed the information I gathered in a variety of ways, guided by a number of recent propositions for analysis of narratives and case studies. I have arranged the account of the events of each practice borrowing from the writings on process tracing, or what

others call 'process analysis' (Mahoney, 2004). This method of analysis emerged in the field of cognitive psychology in the U.S. in the 1970s and it is now employed in the social sciences; more characteristically in political sciences (Bennett & Checkel, 2014). Some have alternatively proposed the notion of 'practice tracing', which incorporates interpretive approaches in the field of political science (Pouliot, 2014). This approach contrasts practices to mechanisms, defining the former as "ways of doing things that are known to practitioners" and refer to the latter as "theoretical abstractions that social scientists coin in order to classify practices" (Pouliot, 2014:238). This is suitable for the objective of my research, which seeks to document *the ways*, rather than to develop a taxonomy or types. I organise the events chronologically and then link them to a specific outcome in the process (see 9.2 below); this is then analysed as a whole and related to theory. The signs of whether this practice exists or not, or whether they are active or stagnant, can be determined by the moments of encounter of the parties involved. This is documented by the series of events that show the rhythm of the processes; e.g. meetings, conflicts, document submissions, building, and ceremonies.

I have placed the accounts on the practices in one chapter (see 5 below), and opted to place the bulk of the discussion in a separate chapter (see 6 below). While Yin (2009) and Flyvbjerg (2011), observe how case studies have 'two plots', one "concerned with actual sequences of actions and events" and another that is "the conceptual and theoretical" (AAPS, 2011:25), they are not prescriptive on how these ought to be interwoven. In the case of my research the 'sequences of actions' constitute the accounts gathered through the narratives which are then confronted with the 'concepts and theory' in the discussion chapter. These are brought together in a manner resembling successive approximation (Neuman, 2011:532), as analysis takes place on a number of occasions throughout the research. This is a process of analytic induction, but it is simplified here as there was not the opportunity to re-formulate the hypothesis and re-engage with a new round of data collection, as some textbooks prescribe (Sarantakos, 2013:376).

I have also processed the documents gathered into 'artefacts' that re-present the information for ease of analysis. Many of these were processed into visual displays aiming to represent more than one message. I strived to include as much visual material as was

relevant in order to convey some sense of the spatial qualities of the places I write about. However, only in one case (Windhoek) was I able to capture ‘the whole’ of the site (i.e. every structure), simply because of the scale of the space in question (see Annexure 2, in 9.1 below). I include here only the relevant documents to support the narrative; I have digitalised the rest of the documents and kept them on a password-protected database for future consultation.

3.9. Relating the practices to theory

This chapter relates directly to the conceptual framework outlined in the previous section. My project relates to theory in an inductive direction, in the sense that my point of departure was documenting the practices and then gradually building a theoretical framework suitable to engage with them and transform them into material for knowledge production. Some textbooks observe that conceptual frameworks can “emerge from experience” and “revised and corrected through research, and refocused to serve the needs of the study” (Sarantakos, 2005:106). Some readers may approach this work for positivist reasons; e.g. to find ways of ‘improving’ similar processes that they are involved with. However, the aim is for this research to be useful to understand various other issues and to reflect on on-going and long-standing issues.

3.10. Conclusions

I have argued for the adequacy of case study to study the socio-spatial practices I document. The notion of practice carries its own theoretical debate and methodological propositions. However, while these debates have been outlined, I draw from various sources to construct the methodology of my project. The focus on ‘the practice’ is offered as an alternative to the analyses of ‘housing markets’ and ‘mechanisms’. I structure the methodology as a case study as it has been deemed adequate to learn from local experience and to speak both to theory and practice. I employ narratives that I then complement with an array of documents

that I process and re-present through visual displays. The information is analysed drawing from process/practice tracing/analysis, and other social science tools that allow the information to speak to various theories and scales. Following a structure that separates 'findings' and 'discussion', I present the accounts on the practices first (see Chapter 5 below), and then present the analysis in the following chapter (see Chapter 6 below).

4. Background

This chapter provides a set of historical trajectories in Namibia within which the practices I document can be situated. This chapter is divided in two: firstly, I outline the field of ‘land and housing’ in Namibia; secondly, I write about social organisations in the socio-spatial realm. I then provide a short conclusion outlining the key implications for the cases I document.

4.1. Land and housing in Namibia

In this section I start by outlining the policy and legal framework for spatial production in Namibia. The second section deals with a short outline of the development of local government in Namibia, which has a very specific trajectory that is important to have in mind when discussing local governance through the cases below. I include a short section outlining the professional landscape in Namibia, as this has also implications to understand the way professionals operate today and to understand better the implications of the transitions that are discussed also below. Lastly, I conclude with a section where I argue how Namibia can be said to be in a socio-spatial crisis today. It is this pressing situation, that is the setting where the practices I document take place.

4.1.1. The policy and legal framework

Land administration systems are directly affected by the ‘dual nature’ of Namibia’s legal system. There are two main modes through which land is administered in the country: customary and common law; as well as the special case of Rehoboth, which has a unique system⁶. There are four types of land: state land (including national parks and ‘registered’ diamond areas), urban land (either owned by the state, by the local authority [LA], or

⁶ The area of Rehoboth and its environs (Rehoboth Gebiet) is regulated by a separate Acts allowing it to administer the land independently through a magistrate for those within its constituency; it also has its own independent office performing the function of the Deeds Office. This stems from the historical autonomy that the area gained since the late 1800s when a group of ‘Basters’ (what would later be classified as ‘coloureds’) from the Cape settled in the area.

privately), commercial private farmland, and communal land; the latter is in effect owned by the state but held in trust for the traditional authorities governing over this jurisdiction (LAC, 2005:18) (see Figure 5). Communal land largely corresponds to where the former ‘homelands’ were, and today it is regulated through Communal Land Boards, which are established for each region and include stakeholders in land matters. Holders of communal land rights are encouraged to register their parcels; however, it is calculated that from an “estimated 245,000 communal land parcels that are envisaged to be registered, 160,000 parcels have been mapped, and thereof [sic] 82,000 parcels have been registered with certificates” (Matthaei, 2014). Others also note that, despite the theoretical use of communal land, the main use “is no longer limited to subsistence farming for residents, and the traditional authorities no longer control all aspects of land distribution” (Mendelsohn & Nghitevelekwa, 2017:6) but instead, the majority of people living there perceive an income from non-farming activities and the uses are wide-ranging: hospitality, industry, education, health, retail, among others. Currently, most of the land in the country is held privately for agricultural purposes; and only a very small fraction represents urban areas (see Figure 8). Land can be owned by individuals, trusts, legally constituted bodies and institutions, duly constituted cooperatives and the state (UN-Habitat, 2005:36). The table below lists different tenure types currently enabled by the Namibian legal framework (see 9.5 below). Article 98 of the Namibian constitution stipulates various forms of ownership, which are applicable to land and housing: public, private, joint public-private, co-operative, co-ownership, small-scale family (Republic of Namibia, n.d.). This is in line with the National Land Policy, which recognises several kinds of land rights, while unmistakably placing freehold tenure as the privileged tenure form.

Table 3 Types of land in Namibia

Type	Description	Legal basis	Implications
Customary	Only in communal areas, allocated by traditional leaders and land-owners, and can be registered.	<i>Schedule 5(1), Constitution Communal Land Reform Act, Act 5 of 2002</i>	For urban areas that are expanding into communal land, this may cause conflict of rationales.
Freehold	Ownership held in perpetuity.	<i>Article 16 of the Constitution Agricultural (Commercial) Land Reform Act, Act 6 of 1995</i>	In urban and commercial land, this is the highest form of ownership.
Leasehold	Can be held up to a period of 99 years, currently primarily for business purposes.	<i>Common law Communal Land Reform Act National Resettlement Policy National Land Policy</i>	Not commonly employed as a strategy for
Permission to occupy (PTOs)	Certificates were granted by the Ministry of Land Reform (MLR), but were phased out within three years after the introduction of the Communal Land Reform Act, Act 5 of 2002	<i>Local Authorities Act, Act 23 of 1992</i>	
Starter title	The title is in relation to a collectively-owned block of land.	<i>Flexible Land Tenure, Act 4 of 2012</i>	Only in urban areas; not yet implemented.
Land-hold tile	Having virtually all benefits of Freehold, without some of its procedural requirements.	<i>Flexible Land Tenure, Act 4 of 2012</i>	Only in urban areas; not yet implemented.
Prescription	Ownership attained by uninterrupted possession over 30 years.	<i>Prescription Act of 1969</i>	Only in urban areas; sometimes invoked upon the threat of eviction.
Municipal (informal)	Locally-issued certificates acknowledging occupancy, holding currency only at the LA in question.	<i>Municipal council resolutions by the LA in question</i>	Only in urban areas; <i>ad hoc</i> way to address informal settlements.
Informal	Rights based on the virtue of occupying a place.	<i>De facto</i>	

Based on UN-Habitat (2005:42).

In Southern Africa, the settler-introduced legal system strongly influences the nature of the land administration system and by doing so influences the prevalence of a specific form of ownership and way of transacting land. In the case of Namibia, the legal system is based on Roman-Dutch law, in which landed property follows the principle of *superficies solo cedit*, where everything permanently attached to the land is considered as part of the land.

Therefore the distinction between land and housing rights is one “of emphasis rather than law” (UN-Habitat, 2005:7). This legal system is shared with South Africa, Zimbabwe, Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland; but is different from the Portuguese ‘civilian system’ operating in Angola and Mozambique, which tends to reduce the role of courts in land and housing rights and whose political socialist background favoured state ownership; or the English system in Malawi and Zambia, where leasehold title is preferred over that of freehold (2005:7). Studies attribute the challenge to private land property rights that some countries in Southern Africa have made (e.g. Zambia) as an enabler factor in developing different forms of tenure : “[w]ithout ownership as a dominant tenure form it was possible to experiment with alternative forms of urban tenure in the urban setting” (2005:9). One key difference between the two other settler legal systems (namely Portuguese and English) and the Roman-Dutch one is that “freehold is less hegemonic” in the latter system(UN-Habitat, 2005:7). However, while there are considerable differences in the way law is practised in each of these three systems, none of these countries “resists the growth of informal settlements” (UN-Habitat, 2005:12) and the issue of rural land remains a sensitive topic in most of Southern Africa and arguably in the continent as a whole (AUC-ECA-AfDB, 2011). South Africa is historically and legally the most similar case to Namibia, to the point at which “South African judgements have considerable weight in Namibian courts” (UN-Habitat, 2005:63).

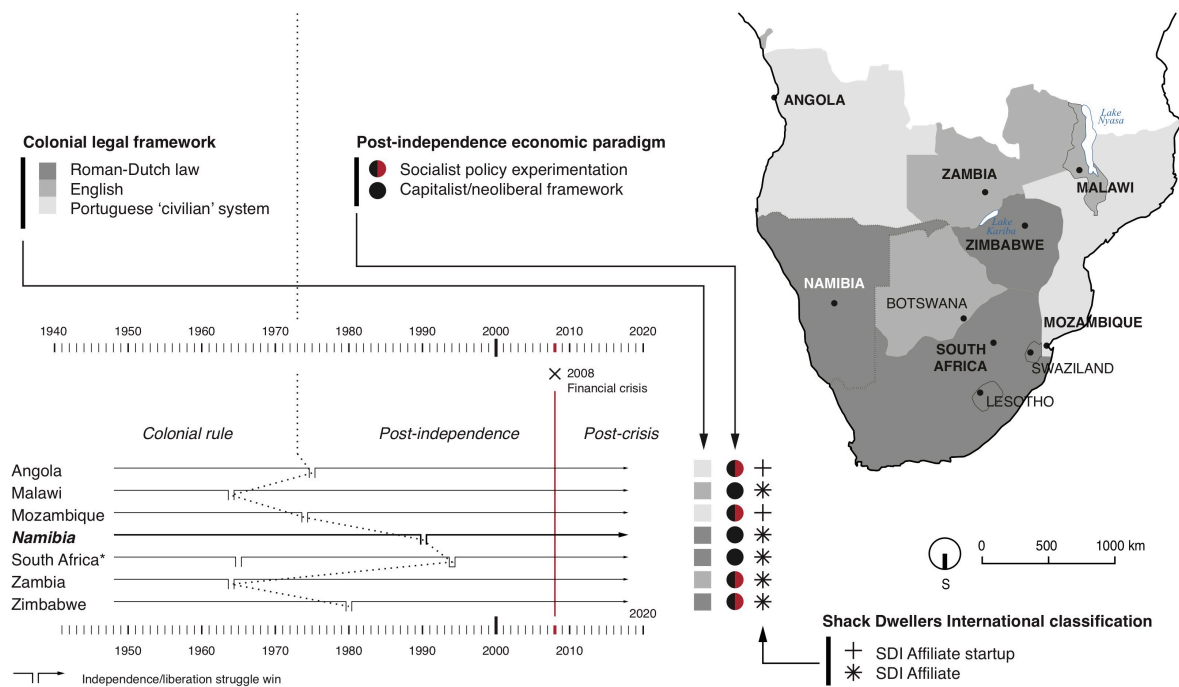


Figure 5 Map of land-related regional aspects.

The supreme authority in Namibia is the constitution, where housing or access to urban land is not mentioned as such. There are nevertheless three ways in which such rights can be derived from the constitution. Firstly, from the right to property in Article 16; however, this can refer to any kind of property, including e.g. intellectual property. Secondly, from Article 95, which provides for the promotion of welfare for everybody in terms of living conditions and other aspects. The third one, and perhaps most direct, is derived from Article 144 in which Namibia subscribes to international law. As a signatory of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in 1994, which includes the right to adequate housing, Namibia is bound to ensure this right. Such right, however, is only effective between international bodies and countries, therefore Namibia can only be held liable in case it contravenes or fails to ensure this right as a state. However, the adequate housing framework does not reflect directly in government-supported housing efforts as it does, for example, in South Africa (van Schalkwyk, forthcoming). Article 100 of the Constitution stipulates sovereign ownership of natural resources, including land, water and mineral resources above and below the land, which are owned by the state.

The legislation with regards to land and housing delivery in Namibia is extensive and, as a recent report referring to land delivery indicates, the process “is not governed by one comprehensive piece of legislation, but by various acts and ordinances” (Ulrich & Meurers, 2015:1). Some of these pieces of legislation deal with town planning, whilst others deal with matters of surveying, land administration, local government, among other aspects. In some cases, legislation governing rural areas becomes relevant in cases where proclaimed urban areas encroach on them. There are also national plans and policies, as well as international agreements and other documents that are often quoted in government discourse and public debate. Then there are national regulations for some of the professions which play key roles in the production of space (e.g. surveyors, engineers, planners, architects), which also have an influence on the process (e.g. honorarium, which naturally impacts on how much it costs to engage a private professional); however, these are not discussed here.

4.1.2. An overview of the development of local government in Namibia

The earliest mention of local government, as we understand it today, can be traced back to German colonial times, where a form of self-governance was instituted along with the centralised power that relied on the Governor. This municipal system came to an end with the end of the German colonial times in 1915 and a system of municipalities was established in the Proclamation No 22 of 1920. Local government was influenced by the ideas contained in the South African Group Areas Act, which institutionalised the system of geographical reorganisation nationally and locally based on race. Another important piece of South African legislation was the Promotion of Bantu Self-Government Act No.46 of 1959 that, according to Goldblatt, was “[t]he solution to the problem of maintaining for all time the political, economic and social separate identity of the White man in South Africa, and his domination over the Non-White” (1971:245). This gave each ‘ethnic group’ “its own territory and also its own government and legislature” (1971:245) and was a system conceived to be “extended progressively until the members belonging to these groups had reached a stage of development which, in the opinion of the Republic Government, would warrant complete self-government and ultimately independence being granted to them” (1971:245). In a way,

this meant that 'local government' was conceived to become eventually a form of ethnic, and secondary, 'national government'.

Although the Apartheid times had far-reaching consequences, the fact of Namibian independence in 1990 did not break with the socio-spatial pathway established previously. The Apartheid times saw the creation of the coloured and black townships, which entailed forced displacement of 'blacks'. Key to this was the displacement or forced removal from the 'Old Location' in Windhoek, which according to some was one of the key triggers in the struggle for independence. Although at the time of independence, a commission was established to re-draw the regional boundaries set during the Apartheid time, some observe this as merely a re-structuring of borders and creating new land which ultimately led to speculation (Simon, 1996). At this point, municipalities were largely spaces for 'whites'; small towns governed by a Peri-Urban Development Board; and various quasi-urban areas which had been ethnically re-organised in 1980 for them to be represented through 'Regional Authorities'. This changed with the Local Authorities Act of 1992, which abolished these authorities and instituted the three tiers through which local government is organised today: regional councils, local authorities, and council settlement areas.

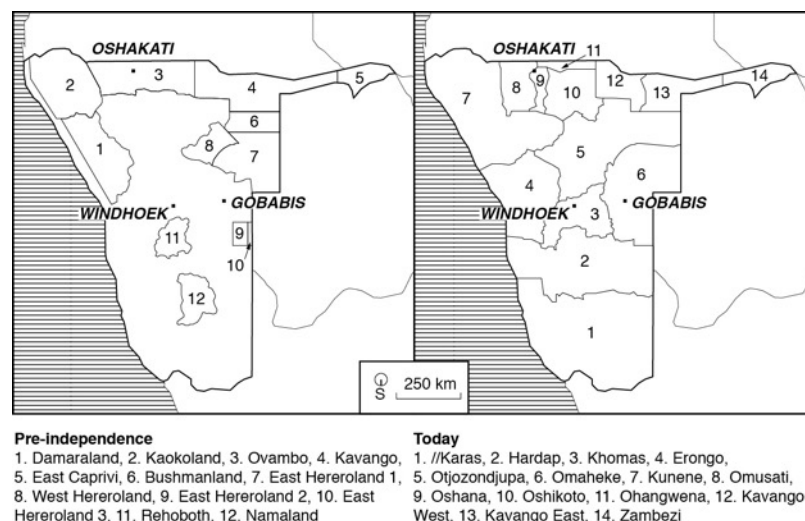


Figure 6 Maps of regional change in Namibia before independence (sourced from a map dated in 1978) and today.

The LAs theoretical 'coming of age' can be said to be in decentralisation efforts during the decade after independence. Around the time of independence, LAs were described as "little

more than local offices of MRLGH [Ministry of Regional, Local Government and Housing, now Ministry of Urban and Rural Development (MURD)]” (Simon, 1996:72). The push for decentralisation in Namibia was informed by international debates (Dubresson & Jaglin, 2001), but after several experiences, these efforts remain characterised by their paucity till today (NID, 2014:144). Some these functions are listed in the table below.

Table 4 Table outlining tasks to be decentralised to local authorities in Namibia from 2001 onwards

Local Government level	Tasks to be decentralised from 2001 onwards
Regional Council	Primary health care; community and early childhood development; rural water supply; pre-primary education; emergency management; conservation; forest development and management; works maintenance and management; agency services to villages and settlements; administration of settlement areas; management and control of communal lands; resettlement, rehabilitation and housing; responsibility over personnel; physical and economic planning including capital development projects.
Local authorities: Municipalities	Recurrent and capital budget; traffic control; vehicle testing and licensing; community development; responsibility and accountability of water and electricity provision and collection of taxes; housing for lower income groups; administration of settlement areas; social services in general (e.g. street children, orphanages, disability programmes); youth, sport and recreational activities; libraries; control of aerodromes.
Local authorities: Town Council	Traffic control; vehicle testing and licensing; distribution of water and electricity; refuse collection fees; control of aerodromes; libraries; budgeting responsibility; and sport and recreational facilities.
Local authorities: Village Council	Collection of grazing fees; recreational facilities; water and electricity supply; sewerage; refuse and collection of consumption fees; and control of aerodromes.

With information from MRLGH (1998) and NID (2014).

Today, local government in Namibia is composed of regional and local government. There are 14 regions led by a Governor, who is appointed by the president to represent central government in the region in question. The function of Governors is to acquaint themselves with all the relevant matters in the region, act as mediator between disputes, mediate with Traditional Authorities, and report back to the President and other relevant government organisations, ministries and agencies (O/M/As). Each region is divided into constituencies,

which are headed by regional councillors who are elected individually in local and regional elections; these form the Regional Council. These, are in fact “the only elected politicians in Namibia who have clear links with constituents” (Hopwood, 2005). And while Regional Councils may develop regional housing policies and also oversee housing-related matters in rural areas and with village councils, this is seldom done in practice.

There are four kinds of urban areas: municipalities (13), town councils (25), villages (14), and settlement areas (54) (MRLGHRD, 2013a). This categorisation is not based on geographical extent or population size, but rather from the capacity of the urban area to borrow from commercial financial institutions. LAs can be furthermore upgraded or downgraded by the line ministry (MURD). An example is how, in 2010, the Ministry downgraded three municipal councils to town councils (Karibib, Karasburg and Usakos), and one village council to a settlement (Uis) (The Namibian, 2010). Within their constituency, LAs typically own most of the land (UN-Habitat, 2005:45). LAs are composed of technical staff, governed by an elected council voted through party ballot, not by individuals. One of the key challenges reported in academic work in the 1990s, which arguably continues up to today, is the level of experience of elected councillors, who often clash with other officials and technical staff. LAs are also required to prepare land use plans for their area of jurisdiction, although owing to the lack of internal capacity, these are largely sub-contracted to private firms. Usually, these plans determine the use, density, heights, floor area ratios, parking and other building restrictions. However, in some urban areas the plans have “virtually no impact on the emerging urban form”, a fact which “raises serious question[s] [not only] about conventional physical planning” (UN-Habitat, 2005:63) but also about the LA command over the situation they are entrusted to govern.

In rural areas and the peripheries of urban areas, there are dynamics that involve an additional set of players. On the one hand, there are the Traditional Authorities, which have jurisdiction over land in communal areas and some *de facto* authority in certain urban areas. On the other hand, resolution of matters in rural areas are dealt by Communal Land Boards as well as through mediation of Traditional Authorities. Some observe that, with the growth of urban areas, “[t]he conversion of customary into statutory tenure did not end the customary practices” (Van Asperen, 2010:5). However, the delegated powers of Traditional

Authorities are far fewer than those of their counterparts in South Africa politically and economically; and there is not currently any indication of change in this regard.

Local government's own projected horizon is in part contained in the Local Government Reform Position Paper (MRLGHRD, 2013b), where a number of desirable reforms are listed: to change LA classifications (e.g. remove the two tiers in Municipal classification, remove village classification) and to develop objective criteria for such; to establish a Local Government Advisory Board; to introduce a 'constituency system' that would see local leaders directly elected and ensure competency of councillors; to introduce direct election of mayors and changing their position to full-time employment; to enhance revenue capacity (under which, conspicuously, the formalisation of informal settlements is included); to develop performance management systems and 'integrated development planning'; among other significant reforms. Another critical point is in the way local government is funded in Namibia, as currently there is no national funding formula; creating significant deficits in local government budgets. However, it seems that this document served only for discussion purposes, and there is no indication on whether there is the political will to effect these changes.

4.1.3. The professional practice and the educational setup

Arguably, one of the most significant events is the establishment of the Department of Architecture and Spatial Planning (DASP) at the Namibia University of Science and Technology (NUST) in 2010. The first cohort of architects and planners that undertook their professional undergraduate education in Namibia graduated in 2015 and 2016 respectively. The architecture programme has also been accredited by the South African Council for the Architectural Profession and the Commonwealth Association of Architects. This is a remarkable achievement for a new institution and gives a standing to graduates at an international level and enables them mobility for seeking postgraduate studies in a wide range of countries. I have myself taught three cohorts at DASP, and I can account for the outstanding capabilities of students, which can be attributed to stringent admission requirements but also to a committed and capable academic and administrative staff. The

establishment of DASP has also created a platform for wider debate on socio-spatial matters (Maritz, 2016), which can be exemplified in the Public Forums on Housing and Urbanisation that have been taking place since 2015 at NUST (NUST, 2017). Some educational programmes are regulated by professional institutes (e.g. architecture, planning, surveying) which themselves follow their own dedicated government act regulating the profession. These acts were all developed in the pre-independence period and at a time where the socio-spatial milieu of Namibia was far from the challenges that professionals and others face today. The university has emerged as a stakeholder in the undertaking of socio-spatial processes in Namibia today; a situation that we have ourselves documented (ILMI, 2017). However, I am mindful of the debates that look critically at the university engagements with socio-spatial processes in Southern Africa (Brown-Luthango, 2013; Winkler, 2013), highlighting both difficulties and virtues of these partnerships. Another key consideration is the high regard that 'the university' socially has in contemporary Namibia, which blurs the clarity on whether their contribution is strictly technical or in terms of raising the profile of the activities that academics are involved. The role of professionals in broader partnerships for urban development, can nevertheless be said to be in its early stages in Namibia. It is therefore, that the role of professionals and the institutions responsible for their formation can be said to be in a state of promising flux.

It is also precisely at NUST that many relevant disciplines for the production of space are housed. Apart from those mentioned already, the Faculty of Natural Resources and Spatial Sciences offers degrees in surveying, geo-information, geomatics, quantity surveying, regional and rural development, property studies, land administration; as well as civil engineering at the Faculty of Engineering. At the University of Namibia (UNAM), degrees in public administration, local government, geography, sociology and social work are offered. The Namibia Institute for Public Administration, a public entity to train public servants, offers courses on local economic development, a councillor development programme, on interpretation of regional and local government laws, and writing by-laws, among others (NIPAM, 2017). The Namibian College of Open Learning, which initially started as a directorate at a ministry for adult education and is now an autonomous institution providing vocational, secondary and tertiary education programmes, offers a certificate in local government studies (NAMCOL, 2018). LA organisations such as the Association of Local

Authorities in Namibia (ALAN) and the Namibia Association of Local Authorities Officers (NALAO) have periodic congresses where matters relating to socio-spatial matters are discussed; also professional institutes, particularly the Namibia Institute of Town and Regional Planners, organise 'schools' for its members also focused on such topics. Although this is the contemporary situation, many of the professionals who took part in the cases below had their professional education either in South Africa, since some degrees were not offered in Namibia until recently, or have a different background to the function that they primarily performed in the cases below (e.g. a teacher by profession or a management professional performing as community development officer at a local authority).

4.1.4. The land and housing crisis

Today, the land and housing situation in urban areas in Namibia can be said to be in crisis. If the housing backlog in 1990 was set at 45,000 units with an urban population of 500,000 (and a national population of 1,5 million) (Republic of Namibia, 1990b), and if in 2013 the backlog was estimated at 100,000 units (Shaningwa, 2016) with an urban population of almost a million (and a national population of 2,3 million) (NSA, 2016a), the backlog, if anything, has increased. The pace of delivery of the state-supported entity in charge of housing production, the National Housing Enterprise (NHE), in recent years stands at an average of less than 400 housing units per year (NHE, 2014), and considering that the urban population has since 1991 increased at an average of 29,000 people every year nationally⁷, the impact of NHE appears as frankly negligible. About 20% of the urban population was living in informal settlements around 1990 (Republic of Namibia, 1990b); today, according to the latest estimates of the SDFN and the NHAG, this figure has risen to almost two thirds⁸. This is a dramatic change, considering that at the time of independence, Namibia had "as yet no examples of serious urban decay" (Stals, 1987:26) and informal settlements were considered "a new phenomenon" (Peyroux & Graefe, 1995). Even a decade after

⁷ Based on the latest Inter-Censal Demographic Survey, the increase in number of the urban population has been from 394,777 in 1991 to 1,115,706 in 2016; this is a total increase of 720,929, which yields a yearly average of 28,837 (NSA, 2016a). This calculation excludes the housing need outside proclaimed urban areas.

⁸ Using the 2011 Census and employing the estimates of the Community Land Information Programme produced by SDFN and NHAG, which sets the number of those living in informal settlements at 541,119 (SDFN, 2009), the number of those living in informal settlements represents 60% of the urban population; this furthermore excludes those living in backyards structures and others living in situations below adequate housing standards.

independence, they were still considered “a temporary phenomenon” (Peyroux, 2001:199). In other words, the urban transformation that Namibia has seen since 1990 has been extensive and is largely taking place with only minimal public intervention.

To elaborate on the living conditions in informal settlements would, at this historical point, be redundant. From Engels’ documentation of living conditions of the working class in England (1969[1854]) to Hishongwa’s documentation of poor living conditions in labour compounds (1992), it is well established that the poor face extremely challenging living conditions. While writing up this thesis, I read about cholera outbreaks (Reuters, 2018), floods sweeping away informal structures with fatal consequences (New Era, 2018), and authoritarian threats of eviction by public officials to inhabitants of informal settlements (The Namibian, 2017a). However, informal settlements provide many inhabitants with a foothold in urban life, which at this historical point holds without doubt more prospects of social advancement than life outside. However, in broad terms, it can be said that improving the living conditions in informal settlements is not yet a priority neither of central nor local government: not in terms of policy, as there are no national guidelines for informal settlement upgrading and only few LAs have some form of plan; and certainly not in terms of budgetary allocations.

The housing and urban land crisis in Namibia is embedded in the economic development of the country. It had been common in Namibia for housing prices to double in a matter of four years, and by 2012 prices were climbing at a “record high” (FNB, 2012). Conversely, the rise in wages has been meagre, and by far and away not in line with house price increases (NSA, 2015b, 2016b). Although Namibia’s economy can be said to be comparatively stable, there is no growth in terms of formal employment (World Bank, 2013:vi). Employment is crucial, as in the case of Namibia “[e]xclusion from the formal labour market therefore also means exclusion from the [housing] property market” (Peyroux & Graefe, 1995:41). Employment is also crucial because it is “the greatest factor in migration” (Pendleton, 1979:296), and therefore shapes the population patterns in urban areas. Even living in an urban area is not a guarantee of having the basics for survival, as studies show that in 1999 only 4% of households in Windhoek were eligible for individual service connections, and 16% could not afford to pay the lowest tariffs (Becker & Bergdolt, 2001:144). It has also been reported that

80% of the building materials in Namibia are imported (UN-Habitat, 2005:60), and their prices are therefore subject to the volatility of markets in ways beyond governmental control. It can be argued, therefore, that the system is structurally reproducing homelessness and inequities.

However, it can also be argued that an additional layer of speculation within the system exacerbates the crisis. A study by the International Monetary Fund on the stability of the financial sector in Namibia, reported that about 40% of the loans of commercial banks were in the housing (mortgage) sector, which in turn constitutes 38% of the financial market in Namibia (2007). The institution regarded as “high” the exposure of the Namibian financial sector to housing and urban land, as the returns on this sector have been hard to match in other, perhaps more productive, areas of the economy. A more recent assessment by the same institution on the dangers that the rapid increase in housing prices in Namibia posed for the national economy, determined that house prices in Namibia were overvalued (IMF, 2016). Taking the median house price in Namibia, which towards the end of 2017 stood at N\$1.1 million, a commercial loan over 20 years at an interest rate of 11%, would require a monthly income of N\$37,846 to pay it off; and the cost of the loan would be about 2.5 times the original cost of the house (Bank Windhoek, 2016). Taking the 2012 Namibia Labour Force Survey as a measure, those in a position to access such a loan represent fewer than 4% of the population (NSA, 2012). Nevertheless various contemporary efforts centre on finance, and how to stretch this to ‘serve’ the poor. I have written previously with Lühl on the financialisation of housing in Namibia (Delgado & Lühl, 2013), which is a phenomenon now recognised at the highest political levels as a matter of concern (e.g. UN, 2012, 2017). While Namibia’s current economic slowdown may have eased the pressure of investment in housing somewhat, the trends towards financialisation and speculation cannot be said to be stopping yet, let alone reversing.

Government responded to the housing crisis with the strategy of ‘mass housing’. Towards the end of his second term in 2013, former president Hifikepunye Pohamba launched the Mass Housing Development Programme (MHDP). With a price tag of N\$45bn, it was to be

the single largest government intervention since independence⁹. The goal was to build 185,000 units before 2030, and the first phase aimed at building 10,000 housing units nationwide (Republic of Namibia, 2013). Although the original ‘blueprint’ included the development of various kinds of housing delivery mechanisms, including ‘people’s housing processes’, only credit-linked houses were developed, which required major state subsidies that still resulted in a product that only middle-income households could afford. For these and other reasons, the media up to today continues to report on houses remaining empty (The Namibian, 2018). After various setbacks, the programme was suspended in 2015, and a year later, a review of its blueprint was given to NUST; a project in which I have participated. The way the programme unfolded put further in doubt on whether the ‘mass housing’ strategy or the methods of NHE are adequate to tackle Namibia’s housing crisis. The results of the Build Together Programme and the SDFN/NHAG efforts appear to yield benefits for a wider number of inhabitants; however no systematic assessment has yet been conducted. According to our own stocktaking of the Build Together Programme (BTP), the programme benefits about 2,000 inhabitants every year; together (and sometimes in conjunction with) SDFN/NHAG efforts, they have had the widest reach, including not only improved living conditions, but also educational and organisational activities.

⁹ For comparative purposes, see how in 2013 the MHDP had an estimated cost more than double the largest intervention at the time, namely Husab Mine in Erongo (N\$20bn), which was also supported by Chinese investment; this mine was itself four times higher in costs than other national infrastructural programmes documented at that time (e.g. Luderitz gas plant, a new container terminal in Walvis Bay, and the Neckartal dam in the south) (IJG Research, 2013:7). In other words, the project appears, from its beginning, to be over ambitious.



Figure 7 Photographs of MHDP houses in Walvis Bay.

It is no coincidence that in 2014, members of the ruling party youth league took a more radical stance on matters of access to urban land and housing. After invading a plot of land in the upper-income area of Kleine Kuppe in Windhoek, and threatening mass land invasions of urban land, the Affirmative Repositioning (AR) movement caught public and political attention. By doing so, they placed the urban land and housing issue at the centre of the

national agenda. The impact that mass land invasions in urban areas would have on the economy would have been far-reaching, so the Government soon entered into dialogue with the group. The Mass Urban Land Servicing Programme (MULSP) was the result of this engagement; it aimed at servicing 200,000 plots by 2020 (MURD, n.d.). The project started through a number of meetings on a committee basis with a wide array of stakeholders and aimed initially at developing land in three pilot sites: Windhoek, Walvis Bay and Oshakati. However, the current status of the programme is unclear. Not long after, the rural and ancestral land question was raised when a vocal Deputy Minister of Land Reform was fired and went to support a political movement under the name Landless People's Movement (LPM). This mobilisation has been organising bottom-up on matters neglected by the mainstream discourse on land, particularly with the looming Second Land Conference that is following on the one that took place in 1991. Regarding AR, the debate continues between those who think that such action is politically motivated and those who think they represent Namibia's "Fanonian moment" (Becker, 2016). On a similar line, LPM activities gained traction when the ousted Deputy Minister started supporting them, which raises questions on whether these two movements are not utilised by ruling party outcasts seeking political leverage. Irrespective of these questions, the two movements bring key socially relevant issues to the fore at a time when decision-making on socio-spatial matters appears to be at a critical juncture.

Recent estimates place Namibia's population at 2.6 million, half of whom live in an urban area. United Nations (UN) estimates show that rural population started decreasing since the early 2000s. Estimates suggest that by 2050, there will be 3.1 million living in urban areas alone; a point at which Namibia will have 4.3 million inhabitants and the proportion between urban and rural will be exactly opposite to that of 1990 (UNDESA, 2018). In 1987, some regarded the UN definition of an urban area as consisting of at least 20,000 people, "unrealistic" for Namibia (Stals, 1987:8); today, about 16 urban areas in Namibia fit this description (NSA, 2011:39). While migration continues, primarily from the north to the central (Khomas Region) and coastal (Erongo Region) areas (NSA, 2015b), it remains to be seen whether the "double rootedness" (Tvedten, 2008) that scholars have observed regarding inhabitants who have a foothold in both urban and rural areas will continue as intensively and/or as fluidly as it has. Some, for example, observe that Windhoek "does no

longer serve as an urban foothold for rural migrants, but has become *home* to many migrants” (Becker & Bergdolt, 2001:143, my emphasis). The degree to which the very features of urban life in themselves play as a restructuring factor in the Namibian society, maybe still today be underestimated.

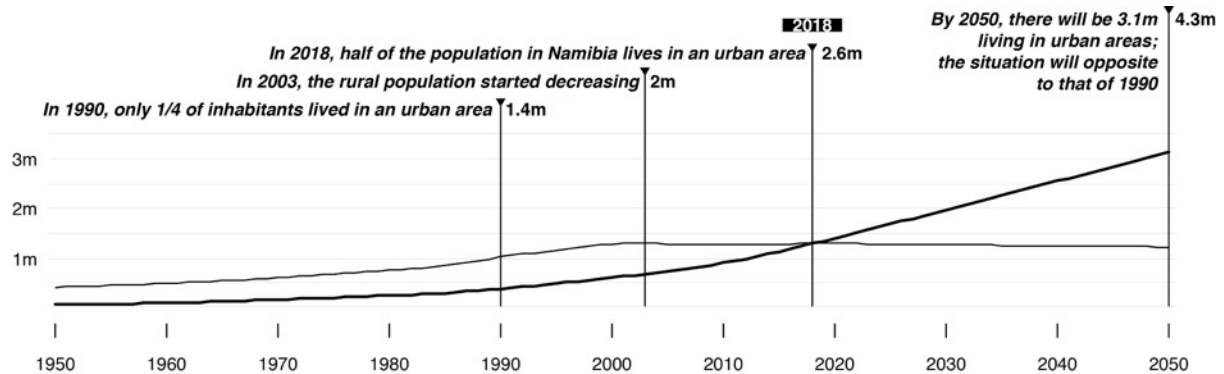


Figure 8 Urbanisation estimates for Namibia. Source: UNDESA (2018).

At the moment Namibia is undergoing a time of austerity after the national accounts have been weakened by excessive expenditure in preceding years. The two large land (MULSP) and housing (MHDP) government programmes have been reduced to the very minimum, and only key capital projects are being developed. This has affected considerably the construction sector as well as the socio-spatial professions (e.g. architects, quantity surveyors, builders) across the board. There is currently a drive for ‘public-private partnerships’, and although a new piece of legislation, the Public Private Partnership Act (Act No. 4 of 2017) clearly defines the use of PPPs, some LAs seem to seek engagement with the private sector on their own terms. In terms of the legislative framework, the New Urban and Regional Planning Bill was approved by Parliament in 2017 and the regulations are currently being drafted. The new bill also involves a national spatial development framework (NSDF), which is set to be a guiding document for socio-spatial development on the national scale. Although Africa is the continent with the fastest growth in its urban areas, only one in three countries has a national urban policy or plan (Turok, 2015); Namibia is not one of them, but perhaps NSDF is a step in this direction.

The burdensome land delivery process (see 4.1.1 above) has been subject to criticism, and some of the newest developments are large-scale housing estates developed largely

through sectional title legislation (e.g. Osona Village) to avoid cumbersome proclamation procedures. Another alternative proposal comes from an established foreign NGO that recently established a branch in Namibia, Development Workshop, focused on socio-spatial issues, which envisions a system led by local government in which low-income inhabitants arriving at urban areas are settled through a basic system of planned layouts and accessing a local registry for gaining land tenure (Weber & Mendelsohn, 2017). While some towns continue to employ displacement of informal settlements to give way to 'formal' growth, some have explored ways for 'planning layouts' so that 'informal' growth can take place in an enabling way for subsequent formalisation. This is the case of Otjiwarongo and at least one extension in Rehoboth (Esterhuizen, 2016). The City of Windhoek is currently reviewing its strategy and planning schemes, but this is largely happening behind closed doors. In their case, more than dealing with 'land delivery' in terms of green-field sites, the challenge is to define a strategy for the extensive informal settlements. New urban areas are emerging in the populated north of the country; some of them acting as a recipient of displaced inhabitants from larger towns, seeking more affordable land. The common thread in these new developments is land prices as a factor in displacement.

The looming 'Second Land Conference' is also set to redefine the way in which the country deals with land redistribution. The issue of 'expropriation without compensation' that is currently at the centre of public debate in South Africa, has some resonance in the Namibian context. The point on which various scholars from various disciplines agree regarding the land question in South Africa is that it is more about political will and security of tenure than legal reform (Ntsebeza & Hall, 2007; Hendricks, Ntsebeza & Helliker, 2013; Hornby et al., 2017), and this view holds some truth for Namibia's situation. In a recent State of the Nation Address, the President indicated two major 'new' themes in addition to those discussed at the first conference: matters of ancestral land and 'urban land reform' (Republic of Namibia, 2018). 2018 may therefore prove to be a decisive one if the promises are matched with concomitant action.

Spatially, in material terms, the segregated nature of Namibia's urban areas is taking on new variants of developing. In Windhoek, 'gated communities' and 'lifestyle estates' are emerging as new typologies for fragmentation (Morange et al., 2012). While 'gated

communities' appear generally within towns, 'lifestyle estates' can be considered gated communities outside the city's main fabric; lower land prices allow for larger plots, and the green-field situation allows for the establishment of an aesthetic theme that is thereafter enforced through body corporate regimes. The garden city-approach of rejecting the city in favour of more pastoral, 'liveable', and exclusive yet affordable environments, resonates here. The missing aspects in this respect seem to be centrally-located, affordable, high density and mixed-used developments that would allow for not only a different typological aspect in terms of city form, but also a break with the pattern established during Apartheid times.

Finally, a special mention should be made of the Flexible Land Tenure (FLT) System, which has been in development for more than 20 years now. In short, it aims at providing a more accessible titling process for low-income groups in terms of cost and procedures. Early work on this form of titling started in the 1990s with Danish support, and while it was "adopted" by government in 1997 (Christensen, Werner & Højgaard, 1999), the Flexible Land Tenure Act was passed only in 2012 and the regulations that are required for its implementation have been passed at the time of writing. FLT is regarded as innovative by many (Christensen, Werner & Højgaard, 1999; Agustinus & Deininger, 2005; Muller et al., 2016), while others argue that it "creates a somewhat parallel system" (Ulrich & Meurers, 2015) and ultimately increases costs for the poor to access freehold tenure within an overall setting very much geared towards freehold title (de Vries & Lewis, 2009; Lewis, 2016). The Act regulating FLT was passed in 2012, and pilots are set to be implemented in, coincidentally, the three urban areas where my cases take place. Key in the legislation is how the act prescribes the formation of 'associations' to hold starter and land hold titles, themselves to be governed by a constitution whose format is to be determined by a committee appointed by the minister. Some key sections are included as attachments (see 9.6 below).

The relevance of this is the prescription of grassroots associations as a prerequisite for land rights by law. At the same time, some LAs are issuing letters or certificates acknowledging occupation (see 5.3.12 below), which perform as a kind of 'locally-registered title', reaffirming the LAs' recognition of the inhabitant, even if it does not comply with national legislation. These experiments are worth a closer look, as already in the 1990s a survey

conducted of a hundred households in informal settlements in Windhoek showed that those who illegally settled make less improvements to their structures than those ‘legally’ resettled (Peyroux & Graefe, 1995:31). Currently, there are three pilot areas where FLT will be deployed, coincidentally in the three urban areas where the practices I document take place: Windhoek, Oshakati and Gobabis. While the regulations for FLT were passed at the time of revising the thesis, it will only be up to this point that concrete findings on the usefulness of this measure will be obtained.

4.2. Social organisation around socio-spatial issues in Namibia

This section explains how socio-spatial issues intersect with associational life in Namibia. The first section provides a historical background of how some of the narratives associated with social organisation were co-opted by the Apartheid administration for oppressive purposes. The second accounts for the emergence of the first organisation mobilised around access to urban land, secure tenure and housing construction, and how it developed to become the Shack Dwellers Federation of Namibia (SDFN). The following section documents the Oshakati Human Settlements Improvement Project (OHSIP), which was a donor-funded and led project aiming to insert democratic practice in spatial production at the local government level. I conclude with a section outlining briefly similar donor-supported projects in the 1990s in Namibia that can be considered precedents, albeit their predominantly top-down nature.

4.2.1. The early ‘self-government’ narrative and the winding road to self-organisation

The idea of ‘self-government’ had oppressive connotations in the Southern African context during Apartheid times. ‘Self-government’ was stipulated in the infamous Act for the Promotion of Bantu Self-Government of 1959, which created the ‘homelands’ for each cultural group. The ideal of a ‘dual’ government system was in fact promoted on the grounds of self-determination. A section in the Odendaal report reads: “one mixed central

authority for the whole Territory would not further the proper aims of *self-determination*” (Republic of South Africa, 1964:55, my emphasis). As if trying to achieve some equality among groups, the report argued that if a “system of one man one vote were to be introduced for the Territory, one group, the Ovambo, [...] would completely dominate the other groups” (Republic of South Africa, 1964:61). This was purportedly in the best interests of the ‘development’ of each of the groups: “a homeland must be created for each population group, in which it alone would have residential, political and language rights to the exclusion of other population groups, so that each group would be able to develop towards *self-determination*” (Republic of South Africa, 1964:61, my emphasis). Even more conspicuous, the land in such ‘homelands’ was not to be ruled through private property, but actually through *communal* ownership; until today the areas falling under traditional administration in Namibia are known as ‘communal areas’. Furthermore, the first actual interventions based on the homeland policy were of a ‘welfare’ nature: hospitals, community centres, postal services (Hangula, 1993:10). It is also worth noting here the observation made earlier of how Parnell and Hart write about ‘*de facto* self-help’ when referring to the way in which African populations were expected to develop their own shelter aided only with the provision of land by the local authority in question (see 2.3.2 above). More than an assessment of the impact of these interventions, what I would like to raise is how notions of self-government, communal property, self-determination, and welfare, which are commonly associated with progressive discourses elsewhere, were part of the narrative and strategy used by the oppressive Apartheid regime in South Africa and Namibia to exert control over the territory.

Interaction with inhabitants on housing-related matters took place already in the decades preceding independence. The Namibia Building and Investment Corporation (NBIC) was established in the year that the influx controls were repealed in 1978. Its aim was to develop homeownership among the low-income black population in Namibia. Dr Anna Muller, who was employed by the institution at that time, remembers how ‘participation’ then had a meaning closer to consultation rather than active participation. Inhabitants would be approached by NBIC employees to gather first-hand ‘data’ for socioeconomic surveys useful for the technical deliberations of professionals during the development of housing proposals. Neighbourhood committees were encouraged as “communication

channel” or “buffers” between inhabitants and local authorities (Becker & Bergdolt, 2001:137). The emergence of ‘spontaneous’ groups organising on issues of housing has been observed by others, who noted that a change had happened around the time of independence in the way these groups took part in socio-spatial development. During the Apartheid time, in the case of Windhoek, despite being ratepayers, black people participated in urban governance through “toothless” advisory bodies, as their recommendations were not binding; it is therefore understandable that the members of such bodies were regarded among their constituencies as ‘stooges’ or ‘sell outs’” for collaborating with the oppressive regime (Simon, 1985:513). Peyroux noted how before independence, ‘blacks’ were “only granted a consultative role in the management” while after independence they were “delegated management functions” (2001:196). However, in both cases, decision-making on the role of the grassroots remained a function of ‘the top’.

The barriers to grassroots associations have been noted in the literature. Some scholars underscore that “during the *Apartheid* era people were reluctant to belong to any clubs or civic groups other than those related to church and sport activities” (Frayne, Pendleton & Pomuti, 2001:282). The same authors, making reference to Williams (1991), state that “traditional institutions in Ovambo society¹⁰ are largely authoritarian and hierarchical, with little scope for the formation and role of *ad hoc* socio-political associations within village life” (2001:283). However, the challenge to more emancipatory self-help processes was not only constrained during the Apartheid administration, but also constrained in different ways after independence. Leys and Saul, in their analysis of the politics of the South West Africa Political Organisation party around independence, observe “tendencies towards authoritarianism [...] in terms of social divisions, and of ethnic divisions in particular” (1995:15). Traditional systems of governance can be said to cross-fertilise with statutory urban governance. This is a relevant point because the so-called ‘headman’ system in rural areas remains present even when the ‘headman’ moves to an urban area and continues to manage the village remotely; something that some have called ‘the urban headmen’ (Mongudhi, 2011). Others observe a system where ‘headmen’ manage ‘locations’ in informal settlements (Frayne, Pendleton & Pomuti, 2001:283). However, the studies quoted

¹⁰ Ovambo-speaking inhabitants represent about 60% of Namibia’s population (NSA, 2011).

here are not anthropological in nature, and should be considered only for reference. While pre-colonial societies organised in a certain way in the context of an agrarian society, that should not automatically apply to the profoundly different setup resulting from urban life.

The first Housing Policy recognised that ‘community participation’ and ‘self-help’ were necessary (Republic of Namibia, 1990b), suggesting the recognition of inhabitant participation in development. However, these early documents are influenced by multi-lateral organisations, and therefore perhaps capture more the international zeitgeist in development rather than drawing lessons from the ground. Describing the leadership of ‘spontaneous’ groups in Windhoek in the 1990s, Peyroux notes how “community leaders tend to express a sum of individual demands rather than convey a collective project” (2001:206). While the 1980s were characterised by considerable uncertainty in many sectors owing to the prospects of independence, Wallace notes that this was also a decade in which “a new flowering of activism inside Namibia helped to make the country increasingly ungovernable, and led to a significant strengthening of civil society” (2011:296). It is in the context of this effervescence and the novelty of urban life, that movements like Saamstaan can be situated.

4.2.2. Saamstaan and the beginning of SDFN

To mark ten years after the Habitat: United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat I), the UN General Assembly resolved to declare the year of 1987 as the International Year of Shelter for the Homeless (General Assembly resolution 36/71, 1981). The Catholic Church in Namibia organised its congregation in a conference to mark this year, and in the context of this event the possibility of Saamstaan emerged (Bolnick, 2016:11). The result of the meeting was the establishment of an association called Saamstaan, which in Afrikaans language means ‘standing together’. Initial activities were made possible with donations from two foreign religious organisations still active today: the NGO Frères des Hommes (which in French means ‘brothers of men’) and the Inter Church Organisation for Development (Keulder, 1994:9). The organisation quickly grew its membership, and after four saving groups were formed, efforts towards the attainment of housing started in

earnest. The funds donated were managed through a revolving fund that was to be replenished by the contributions of members accessing loans from this fund. The members were supported by a team that included several personalities that today lead their field in Namibia in film, politics, and housing; amongst them, the current director of NHAG, Dr Anna Muller (Shuunyuni, 2014). The organisation would engage with the Windhoek Municipality for accessing land, while members would save funds and produce bricks for the construction of their homes. Membership at this point comprised mostly women who worked mainly as domestic workers in wealthier neighbourhoods; a third of them were illiterate and many had received only partial basic education (Keulder, 1994). However, this modest beginning was a prelude to a longer journey that eventually saw these efforts expand considerably.

One of these four groups, the People's Square Project, consisted of 45 members, which registered as a welfare organisation, and through a municipal council resolution, were allocated a piece of land in Windhoek at a price 70% lower than its value. The plot was subdivided in portions measuring 150m², as at this time the National Housing Policy that stipulated the minimum lot size of 300m² had not yet been approved by cabinet. Municipal regulations, however, prescribed that residential plots had to have a car parking space, even if owning a car was an impossibility for the household in question. This shows "the standards that persist in the thinking around low-income housing" (Keulder, 1994:11). Apart from the loan they received from Saamstaan for the land, the group also accessed a loan from the Build Together Programme, which contributed to the building costs. Already then there were two key shortcomings identified with the process: firstly the difficulty of members being able to participate on an everyday basis, as "[m]ost women work a full day and have [to] fulfil their duties at home after the completion of their daily tasks" (Keulder, 1994:14) leaving only weekends for the self-help activities; secondly, the difficulty of repaying monthly instalments and to bring about sanctions for non-paying members. However, the benefits were the reduced costs of housing, which at that time were about a third less than private contractors and NHE (Keulder, 1994). External limitations were the cost of services, which were high both in terms of connection fees and monthly repayments; and also the cost of land, which already then was observed to be increasing considerably (Republic of Namibia, 1990a). One of the key omissions in the documentation of Saamstaan groups at this early stage was the social benefits and the effects that organising and working

together had on members and their households. However, many of the members and some stakeholders are still alive, therefore this work could yet be done. Insights from contrasting the processes then and now would be valuable, to understand the kind of pathway that was followed in terms of social relations and organising for co-production in terms of the production of space.

In 1992, NHAG was established as a support organisation for the saving groups. This kind of organisation resembles the ‘service organisations’ that Stren observed in the early 1990s emerging in South Africa to support grassroots organisations (1994:739). Various groups throughout the country subsequently federated under the Shack Dwellers Federation of Namibia in 1998, a process that has been documented in conjunction with others (Mitlin & Muller, 2004; Muller & Mitlin, 2007; Muller & Mbanga, 2012; Chitekwe-Biti, 2013; The Namibian, 2014). In brief, today the Federation has about 23,000 members and has accumulated about N\$25 million in savings as per 2016 (SDFN & NHAG, 2016). SDFN is member of Shack Dwellers International (SDI), an international network gathering federations of the poor aiming to improve their living conditions and promote ‘pro-poor’ development. A curious fact is that, of all the 32 countries that are members of SDI, Namibia proportionally has the highest percentage of the population organised within their membership¹¹. This is a remarkable feature considering a background in which “there were relatively few common-interest associations prior to independence” (Frayne, Pendleton & Pomuti, 2001:282) in Namibia. Either this was too broad a statement, or major strides have been made since.

4.2.3. The Oshakati Human Settlements Improvement Project (OHSIP)

The project started in 1991 as a partnership between the MRLGH and the Danish cooperation agency Ibis¹². A project report describes the endeavour as “a hybrid between a

¹¹ SDI’s annual reports show that although most of the members are in Kenya, Zimbabwe, India, Zambia and Uganda (2014, 2015), the proportion of members vis-à-vis the country’s population as per 2014 (World Bank, 2018) puts Namibia at the top. SDFN members represent about 0.77% of the population of Namibia.

¹² The latter is a Danish organisation that developed from the Danish student movement and its association with the World University Services network, which supported Southern Africa’s liberation struggles and is known today as Oxfam IBIS, a member of Oxfam International (Oxfam IBIS, n.d.).

community development project and an infrastructure project” (MRLGH & Ibis, 1996:8). A year after the first local government elections in 1992, the international members for the OHSIP team arrived in Namibia. They held meetings in the informal settlements aimed at preparing communities for the project. The report noted that “community organisation in Namibia’s Northern areas was almost unknown” (MRLGH & Ibis, 1996:5). In view of this, the project established Community Development Committees (CDCs) in the four settlements. These committees were democratic in nature, and held elections throughout the process; the report also documents how other organisations emerged out of this process. In 1994, a brick-making income-generating initiative was set up and community centres were built to help with deliberation during the process. Planning began for improvements in the four areas, a register of inhabitants was established, and maps of the settlements were drawn up. In 1995 construction of toilets began, and the brick-making production scaled-up; water points were built in such a way that they could also be used for collective washing of clothes or food. To build the infrastructure of the project, local contractors were hired on the condition that half of the employees were hired from the settlement in question. This organisation was to eventually become financially independent of the project, and the plan was for it to continue supporting OSHIP after the funding ceased; however, this objective was not achieved. The project also facilitated the electrification of the settlements, which introduced “the concept of paying for services” (MRLGH & Ibis, 1996:7).



Figure 9 Map OHSIP infrastructure in the project’s report and today.

Those behind the report, however, recognised the limited success of this endeavour. Working with LAs and government was challenging because these two institutions were in

fact also ‘finding their own feet’ after Independence. The report admitted that “[t]he Project worked essentially in a vacuum” and that opportunities for other forms of co-production or, as they described, of “deeper co-operation and innovation”, were missed (MRLGH & Ibis, 1996:8). The project employed the principles of: “learning by doing” (MRLGH & Ibis, 1996:4), there were informal site demarcation exercises with inhabitants working under the supervision of registered surveyors to cut professional costs. The planning layouts that were developed through the project were recognised by the Oshakati Town Council (OTC), and although they were not recognised within the formal property system, they procured “a sense of ownership and a claim to live on the land” (MRLGH & Ibis, 1996:6). The organisations that were created did nevertheless prove effective in handling issues such as relocations and labour disputes in the commercial ventures of the project. However, a subsequent analysis by a team of academics, found several shortcomings leading to the demise of the structures created by OHSIP. Key to this was the relationship between the CDCs and the LA, which degraded to the point of no interaction (Frayne, Pendleton & Pomuti, 2001:289). The authors, furthermore, found that the project, particularly the component of local governance through CDCs, “remains a donor-driven rather than a community-driven activity” (2001:298-299). However, as will be seen below, the sheer fact that the project had taken place provides a reference in the local governance debates in Namibia and elsewhere.

4.2.4. Donor-funded interventions in housing and ‘participation’

Just after independence, the German development bank KfW (in German, *Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau*¹³) and the Namibian government signed an agreement for the development of low-cost housing. The programme was devised “to accommodate the first groups of squatters relocated from the Single Quarters [labour compounds]” (Peyroux, 2001:201). The key stakeholder in this process was the National Housing Enterprise, as one of the objectives of the project was to enhance its capacity. A steering committee for the project included top government officials, and the team undertaking the process was composed of a German

¹³ KfW was established in the 1940s for the reconstruction of Germany after World War II, and after this task was completed, the bank evolved into a development financial institution.

(SUM Consultants) and a local (Kerry McNamara Architects) consulting firm. The project was very thorough: it involved not only technical experts, but also social workers; it entailed a social development programme; it supported a media campaign for education on homeownership and urban living; and it produced research on the socio-economic and spatial aspects relevant to the project. It included four main components: an upgrading project, focusing on land servicing and public infrastructure; a 'core-house' project; a loan guarantee fund, geared to attract private investment to low-income housing; and building material loans, designed for short-term house improvements. It also included a community development and training programme as well as institutional development support.

The project faced technical delays initially and towards the end it experienced challenges with the selection of beneficiaries and some beneficiaries had to be issued with eviction notices as they were found to have two properties in Windhoek and/or that were in arrears (SUM-McNamara Consultants, 1994). The participatory component was one of consultation rather than enabling potential beneficiaries to determine key aspects of the project. Despite this, the project can be said to have paid considerable attention to social aspects. However, the programme did not reach the lowest income groups as the repayments for the most affordable option offered were still higher than the Saamstaan and other charitable projects (Seckelmann, 1997:24). Some researchers also document the eviction of non-payers and how they were "replaced by households with higher income" without assuming responsibility for those who were displaced; and by doing so, the programme might have "engendered exclusion" (Peyroux, 2001:203). The project eventually produced a number of housing units and infrastructure, but the actual impact in terms of social benefit in terms of lessons learnt with potential consequences for NHE, or the way that the Ministry, architects, and social practitioners operate, remains unexplored.

With French funds, the Ombili Project, which means "place of peace" in Oshiwambo, was carried out in 1990 by the Windhoek Municipality in partnership with the Centre for Research-Information-Action for Development in Africa (CRIAA), a French-funded organisation which had offices in Namibia, as well as in Mozambique, Zimbabwe and South Africa. The project took place between 1991-94 and was also supported by the Ministry (now MURD) and the NHE (CRIAA-SA-DC, n.d.), and was administered by CRIAA (Republic of

Namibia, 1996:28). It entailed the servicing of 300 plots of land with toilets, which were then transferred to households on a lease-to-own basis. Some also observe that the project, “[b]y tolerating long-term non-payers and not implementing sanctions such as eviction” might have engendered a situation of clientelism and dependency (Peyroux, 2001:203). According to a report by NHE, several of the original inhabitants do not live there anymore and the area became a high density one with many more inhabitants significantly in a short time (NHE, 1992:29-30). Similar to the German-supported projects, there is no subsequent assessment of the current state of the intervention and the impact among the beneficiaries.

During the 1990s, there were different foreign-supported interventions focused on housing and the improvement of living conditions. It is worth noting that already in 1992, in view of the socioeconomic profile of inhabitants in Windhoek, professionals recognised that ‘site and services’ were “the only option” for the vast majority (Frayne, 1992:132). However, different proposals were put forward and implemented on the ground. Okuryangava Extension 1 was developed in cooperation with China through a loan to NHE and houses developed by the China National Complete Plant Export Corporation (NHE, 1992). The Urban Trust, a local organisation focused on urban development, partnered with the Cooperative Housing Foundation, a private not-for-profit organisation providing technical assistance in cooperative development. Their joint efforts were geared to advise local institutions “on strategies for cultivating and strengthening community-based organizations in housing and community development”; however, they recognised that it was “still early” in the days of independence for these approaches (Namoya & Hokans, 1994:16). This diagnosis echoes that of the OHSIP team (see 4.2.3 above), as well as some marginal observations in the Ombili and Oshatotwa documentation. Towards the end of the 1990s, it was observed that “funds allocated by the donor community [for housing and urban development] have been declining” (Peyroux, 2001:207). Reflecting on the ‘community’ participation in the restructurings in Windhoek’s periphery in the 1990s and the experiences of Oshatotwa and Ombili, Peyroux remarks that organising inhabitants “seems to be very difficult to achieve”; she suggests that some success may be found in finding “within the population, efficient (and recognised) intermediaries” which she finds “essential in establishing dialogue” and “reinforcing social solidarity” (Peyroux, 2001:207). The ‘creation’

of inhabitants' associations for the purpose of developmental projects, as I have shown here, is something that has a distinct historical legacy in Namibia; with mixed results.

4.3. Conclusion

In this background I have provided evidence that there are historical legacies to the practices I document. I have outlined how the policy and legal framework place Namibia in a very particular situation vis-à-vis its neighbours in Southern Africa, and how this makes differentiating between issues of housing and land almost a matter of emphasis. I have also tried to provide a systemic account of today's urban crisis in Namibia, resorting not only to the historical but also to the contemporary issues. I have then provided an overview of the development of local government and some examples of 'self-help' cases in Namibia. Regarding the former, I have argued how speaking about 'self-determination' has connotations and implications that do not necessarily sit with ease vis-à-vis historical legacies, and how the recent 'creation' of some levels of local government coupled with the relatively recent experience of urbanisation, puts the level of local government in a particularly challenging situation. Regarding the latter, I have provided an overview of the experiences with projects that have tried to address the housing question for low-income groups with some form of 'participatory' component, and how there were different interpretations on how to engage inhabitants in the process. This last section in particular is crucial for the rest of the document as it shows how a utilitarian and controlled approach to grassroots associations has historically proven to yield, at best, mixed results.

5. Three cases of access to urban land for housing

The three cases I document here vary significantly in scale and nature (see 9.1 below). As mentioned elsewhere, my aim is not to provide a comparative account, but to bring together different accounts to present to the reader a range of practices of some of the land and housing practices in Namibia today. The first account is the process that the Dibasen Homeless Committee of Katutura (from now on referred to as Dibasen) has undergone to attain land, housing, services and tenure in the western suburbs of Windhoek. This case consists of about fifty households, which allowed for a close engagement; and I have made several visits to the neighbourhood. The second is the process that members of the Shack Dwellers Federation of Namibia (SDFN) followed at the eastern side of Oshakati to attain land, housing, services as well as some degree of tenure security. This case consists of about 160 households, and although the steps that were followed to access land and housing were relatively straightforward, the area allocated does encroach on communal land. The interactions arising from this reveal the different character of spatial production in the busy 'North'. The third case is that of the 'city-wide' planning efforts in Gobabis, with a special focus in the area of Freedom Square. While the number of households in the latter settlement is known, the 'city-wide' planning project covers virtually all the informal settlements in the town; probably tens of thousands of households. In this case I have tried to outline three processes (i.e. enumeration, planning studios, upgrading) as well as other aspects that the participants have highlighted during their accounts.

While the Windhoek case is an intimate account of Dibasen's journey, the Gobabis case seems to present only a broad overview of what has actually taken place on the ground. The Oshakati case, on the other hand, not only reviews the process, but also expands on the nuances of encroachment on traditionally-managed land by urban areas. Each case has defined limits: in the Windhoek case, I have not gathered individual accounts of every household, which may shed light on the different response to an otherwise largely collective effort. I have also not done that for the other two, which are in any case much larger than Dibasen. The Oshakati account seems to have less information coming from the local authority, but this is largely because the interviewees appeared to genuinely not have had

much to add. They seemed more eager to account for the new middle and upper-income developments and the new infrastructural interventions in town, which is evidence in itself. However, the process on which I focus was straightforward and the nuances that may be relevant on the ground appear as invisible to the local authority. For Gobabis, the sequence of events appears disjointed, but this is precisely a feature that I will expand on further in the conclusion (see 7.2 below). Here, there was some reluctance from several local authority officials and councillors to engage in a longer conversation, and therefore this side of the story may appear to be lacking. I have found this to be conspicuous, but attribute this to matters not related to my research but rather due to internal affairs. While the cases in Windhoek and Oshakati are well-defined, the spatial limits of the account of Gobabis are blurred and continuously expanding. The three cases are currently on-going, and even as I was making the final changes to this thesis, there were new developments taking place. However, I have stopped including new developments as at the end of 2017.

For the three accounts, there was the opportunity to interview a wide variety of stakeholders. I refer to them based on the role that each *mainly* performed, notwithstanding the fact that many of them performed different roles at different points. I do mention these secondary roles, but for clarity of reading, participants are referred to in their primary role that they have played. I have gained insights also from various parties; some of whom generously granted me their time to undertake long interviews, and some who simply made themselves available to verify some of the facts. Not every person who provided some information is listed here, as some merely gave an isolated contribution. Lastly, it is worth noting that the narratives are not entirely chronological but structured according to the matters that were at stake throughout the process (e.g. electricity, demarcation, negotiations).

5.1. Windhoek: 'doing things for oneself'

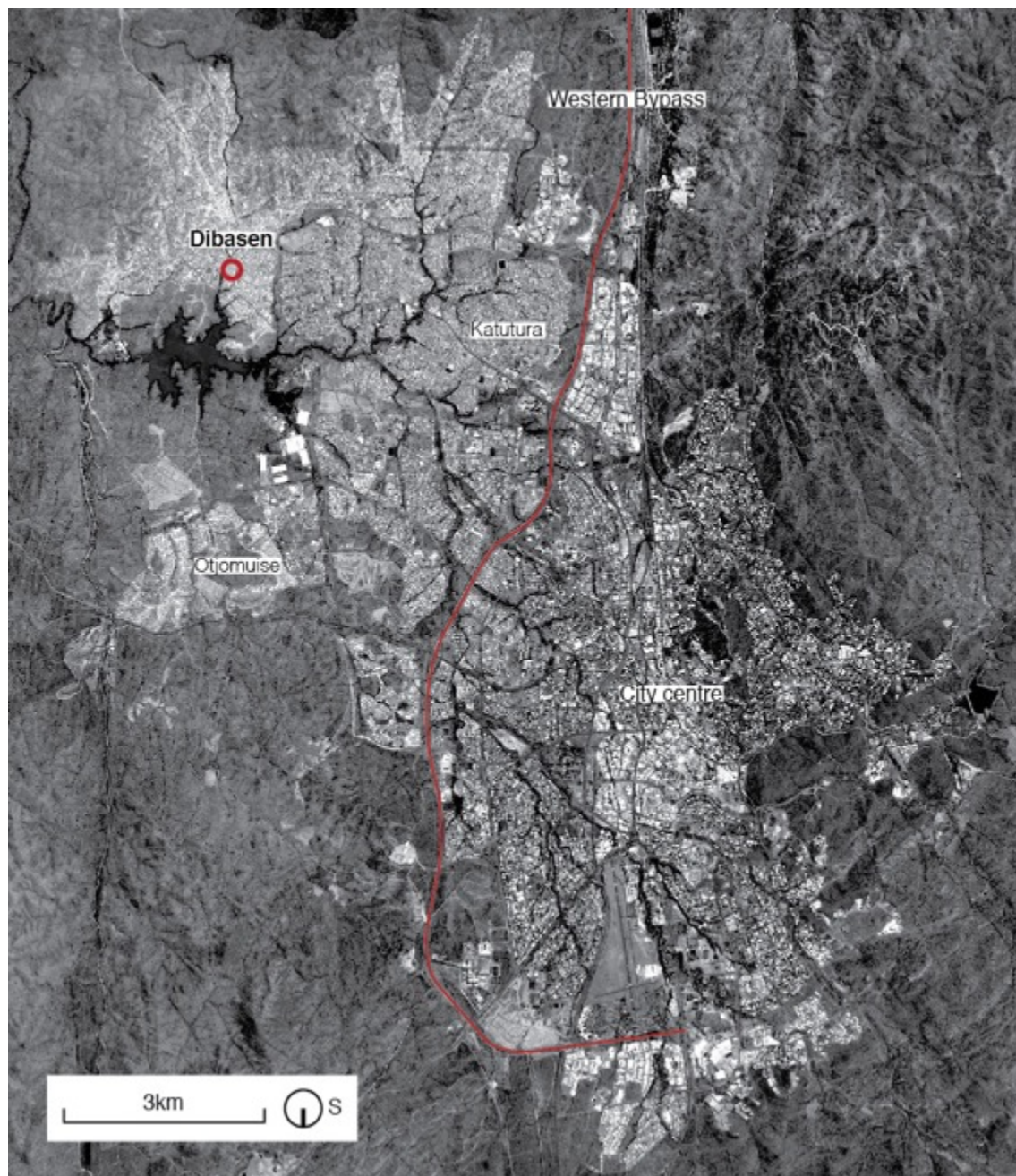


Figure 10 Map of Windhoek with the area in question marked

What initially strikes someone arriving at the neighbourhood where the houses of Dibasen are located is the idea that the place was almost entirely developed by the group itself. Without this information, one might think that the area had been developed by the Municipality, and that the brick houses were built by a government housing agency or by a commercial contractor hired by a public entity. It is clear that the area is supplied with

electricity; each house has a municipal 'green bin' in its yard for weekly waste collection; and the external plumbing indicates that each house has individual water supply and sewerage. While the roads are not paved and there are no sidewalks, many other 'formal' housing developments, including some higher income areas in Namibia, are not equipped with such infrastructure. Only a few plots are fully walled, with most only delimited by some form of fence or vegetation; and there are several cars parked on the street even on a weekday's morning. The place is lively, having not only children playing in the street and passers-by, but also business activities advertised through placards on some of the fences e.g. welding, car repairs, prepared food, sale of meat; and there is also a fully-fledged laundry business operating from one of the houses. One can deduce that often some part of the properties is rented out given the number of makeshift structures surrounding the brick houses. The group leader informed me that this is indeed the case and gave himself as an example.

Dibasen is a housing group in Katutura that was formed in the late 1990s to access land and housing. The group's efforts have afforded it access to full services, and recently it appears to be about to reach what can be said to be its 'final' stage: attaining freehold tenure. Its journey has put members of the group in touch with a remarkable array of stakeholders from various disciplines, sectors, and government levels. Owing to the scale of the group, I was able to trace in considerable detail the various steps in its development. For this case, I interviewed the chairperson of the Dibasen Homeless Committee of Katutura; a Lecturer at the Department of Geo-Spatial Technologies, NUST; a Community Development officer at the City of Windhoek; the Flexible Land Tenure Project Manager at the Ministry of Land Reform; an employee of the Support to Land Reform at the German Cooperation Agency; and a Lecturer at the Department of Architecture and Spatial Planning, NUST, that was formerly employed as planner at the Sustainable Development Division at the City of Windhoek.





Figure 11 Photographs of the neighbourhood





Figure 12 Aerial photographs of the area in question, Goreangab, at four different points in time (from top to bottom, 2004, 2010, 2014, and 2017) with the area developed by Dibasen marked with a red circle. Source: Google Earth.





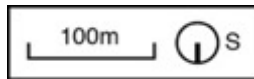


Figure 13 Aerial photographs of the area developed by Dibasen at different points in time (from top to bottom, 2004, 2005, 2007, and 2017). Source: Google Earth.

5.1.1. Registration: *introducing oneself to the State*

The group started in 1998 as a savings group with the objective of attaining land and housing. Not all members of the group lived in close proximity to each other, shared a workplace, or were related; the group came together for a common purpose. Dibasen was formed by people who were either renting accommodation or living in a ‘family house’ in different parts of the western suburbs of Windhoek, the capital city of Namibia, who wanted to have a place of their own. ‘Renting’ in this case does not always refer to the renting of a full house or a room in a brick-and-mortar structure, but can also mean the renting of a backyard structure on someone else’s property. A group of thirteen individuals decided to come together to find ways to change this. However, even for this very first step, there were obstacles. The group leader tells me: “we didn’t have a place where we could have meetings”. Curiously, one of the few well-maintained public parks and community facilities in the Western suburbs is called ‘UN Plaza’, named in 1995 to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the United Nations. It was there that the group started meeting and organising. Dibasen means ‘doing things for yourself’ in Khoekhoegowab (the Damara-Nama language), a message that probably still resonates in the group after twenty years on this journey.

The key step that a savings group takes towards representing itself to other institutions is establishing a legal organisation. The group inquired from another group about how to constitute itself legally and learnt that they needed a constitution, which they went about drafting. They also approached a lawyer, who gave them advice about the steps to take. In Windhoek, groups of residents could simply approach the Municipality without necessarily being legally constituted until the early 2000s, when registration became a requirement. Namibian legislation facilitates the process of individuals organising themselves into a Voluntary Organisation, without the need for legal assistance.

¹⁴. Other options, such as the setting up of a Trust require considerably more administrative effort whilst other entities, such as Cooperatives and Welfare Organisations (also known as ‘Section 21 companies’), require recognition from the Ministry of Agriculture, Water and Forestry (MoAWF)¹⁵ and the Ministry of Health and Social Services (MoHSS) respectively. Dibasen applied for registration as a Social Welfare Organisation without being able to account for the reasons they opted for that status. It obtained the letter of registration from the MoHSS in the year 2000. This document was effectively the recognition by the state that the group exists.

This recognition contained both responsibilities and entitlements. The letter, citing Section 19 of Act 12 of 1979, recognises the ‘Dibasen Homeless Committee of Katutura’ as a Welfare Organisation with the registration number WO 160/4. The first section lists the objectives of the organisation as stated in Section 3 of its constitution:

- *to provide the framework and structure for the homeless to organise themselves with the aim of obtaining affordable plots and building material to erect housing units for each member of the committee;*
- *provide a forum for discussion so as to reach consensus on the way forward;*
- *open an account at any commercial bank or accredited union account to which each member shall pay his or her contribution in accordance with article 7(2) [which says that ‘every member shall be liable to pay a non-refundable registration fee as well as a non-refundable monthly levy to the committee, which levy shall be determined by the Executive in consultation with all the members from time to time and shall be approved at a Special General Meeting or an annual General Meeting (AGM)’];*
- *enlist professional help where necessary, in order to further the aims of the committee;*
- *organise meetings between professional people and the members to discuss appropriate alternative building methods and material[s];*
- *organise other development and income-generating projects; and to*
- *seek for donor funding to assist members in constructing housing units.*

¹⁴ The Legal Assistance Centre, a not-for-profit organisation focused on legal matters, issues step-by-step guidelines for starting welfare organisations, including templates for writing a constitution (LAC, 2008).

¹⁵ It is in this Ministry where the Cooperatives section, which applies to every kind of cooperative, is based.

The letter proceeded with a cautionary note on three issues: the geographical limits of operations of the organisation (“the organisation must limit its activities to the area in its constitution”); that neither the name nor the objectives may be changed without written permission of the MoHSS and requesting the organisation to submit minutes of the Annual General Meeting (AGM) and financial reports every year to the Ministry. The letter ends with a further indication that the group must display its registration number in all official communication and a reminder that it is the Ministry’s right to amend or cancel the certificate according to the piece of law regulating the groups, Act 12 of 1979). These requirements would only be met partially throughout the years. However, the institutional way in which the group has proven to conduct itself renders these provisions secondary, as the overall objective of establishment as an institution has been achieved.

The registration was now in place, despite the fact that the type of organisation that was chosen would subsequently be phased out. Authorities realised in 2012 that there were at least two shortcomings with voluntary associations, when dealing specifically with the objective of attaining land and housing. The first was that according to the law governing such groups, the line Ministry was supposed to give technical support to the organisations that were registered, and because of lack of staff and capacity this was generally not taking place. The second stemmed from the fact that the Act detailed above was not tailor-made for the specific case of land and housing. It speaks in the abstract of the purpose of organisations and in this way any organisation can actually use this legislation for its own purpose (e.g. a church congregation, a charity, or other common-interest associations). However, the specific issue with Welfare Organisations is that, as per the Act, when the organisation comes to an end, the organisation’s assets should go to another organisation with similar objectives. A municipal community worker recounts that at a meeting between the Municipality and the MoHSS, the Municipality asked: “will the group be really willing to donate land and houses to another welfare organisation, when that was their primary objective?” After that meeting, it was decided not to register these types of organisations anymore under this specific Act. However, this did not mean that existing organisations would be de-registered, and therefore this has not become an issue for Dibasen. Regardless of whether the institutional device was the best suited or whether its implementation was fully understood, it seems it has served the purpose of allowing the group to present itself

to other parties with a sufficient degree of institutional organisation, irrespective of whether this was real or perceived.

5.1.2. Land application: *Negotiation, commitment, and rewards*

The land application process started in 1999, requiring the group to negotiate from the very start. The committee applied for a plot of land in a vacant area next to one of the most prominent streets in the Western Suburbs: Eveline Street. The street is arguably one of the best known in Windhoek, even if only by name. It derives its notoriety from the number of business outlets, predominantly *shebeens*, food take-aways, and car washes. Its fame holds significant connotations linked to alcohol abuse and crime, but also to a strong sense of belonging. In the late 1990s, informal settlements in the northeast of the city were just about to increase in size dramatically. The plot that Dibasen applied for was at that time at the city's north-western fringe; today it is geographically fairly central within the Western Suburbs (see Figure 12). The application was refused on the grounds that the plot was planned for a sports field, and the group was offered a plot of land in the then new area of Otjomuise, on the western fringe of the city¹⁶. Dibasen held firm on its choice of plot, citing the lack of development in that area at the time. Recalling their response to the Municipality, the group leader stated that “we don’t want to go there [...] we said we want here, where the development is already”. The Municipality conceded, and in 2000 drafted a sales agreement for Erven 3214 and 3212, in Pendukeni Street, in Goreangab.

While the negotiation with the Municipality was successful, the economic imperative of the transaction followed: the group did not have sufficient funds to pay the first instalment towards the purchase of the plots. When the group had registered, it opened a bank account and members set themselves the goal of each saving N\$1,400 every year. To put this in perspective, this amount would be almost three times the monthly wage of a domestic worker¹⁷. Before a year had passed, each member had almost reached that

¹⁶ Otjomuise was developed as an area to eventually resettle those who were thought to be temporarily settled in reception areas; however, the pace of migration overtook estimates and now it simply stands as a new extension for low-income groups.

¹⁷ The latest minimum monthly wage for domestic workers in Namibia is set at N\$1,353.20 (MoLIREC, 2016). With adjustments for an average annual inflation of 6%, that amount would be equivalent to approximately N\$533 in 2000.

amount, and the group then decided to go ahead and accept the sales agreement. The possibility of attaining land was a strong motivation, and some took major risks towards making this chance a reality. An example of this is a member who resigned from permanent employment to use the money from pension benefits to secure the land. This was, however, only the first disbursement in a sequence of monthly payments that the group would start to commit to incrementally from this point on.

The basic challenges presented by unserviced land started to emerge, and members quickly realised that they would need to take the lead in sorting out each challenge by themselves. Firstly, the land was not de-bushed. Central Namibia enjoys very little annual rainfall, but there is considerable vegetation and the existing trees, which though short with thin branches, are thorny and hard-wooded. De-bushing usually requires machinery, as doing this with a simple axe would prove insufficient, especially when considering that the two plots combined measure 12,944m². Suddenly the act of merely clearing the area became a challenge, but members were ready to save up to hire machinery for the purpose. A group of committee members went to the Northern Industrial area to a company operating bulldozers. The group stated openly in advance that they only had N\$500 for this purpose. The person who attended to the group, seeing the good nature of their request and sympathising with their collective efforts, offered to do it for free. The land was soon cleared and ready for further work. What started as a challenge proved to be an occasion for the group to learn about the power and rewards of common purpose.

5.1.3. Land servicing: *statutory procedures and spaces for innovation*

Although the land was cleared and apparently ‘ready’ for settlement, there was an invisible obstacle that was yet to be overcome. The land was not subdivided into individual plots, and without this step the group would not be able to move in. The process of subdivision requires significant professional input and funds, and usually takes years (see 4.1.1 above). A young municipal planner who at that time had recently joined the Municipality’s Department of Planning, Urbanization & Environment (now Sustainable Development Division), took on the task of assisting the group and made a plan based on some ideas she gained from university: they would “play land surveyors”, she recounts. Through a

participatory 'game' in which both Municipality and members of the group took part, the area was informally subdivided. The municipal planner recalls this process as one of "informal demarcation". The main purpose was to allow the group to continue the process while avoiding a disorderly, and in actual fact illegal, settlement pattern that would later require re-blocking. The plan entailed plots that were slightly smaller than 300m², which was done by the municipal planner to assist the group in lowering costs, as land-related taxes and other rates are calculated based on the size of the plot. This exercise proved to be a key enabler at that moment, but it would need to be revisited further on in the process.

The 'informal demarcation' exercise was an innovation that proved to be significant in overcoming what would otherwise be a significant obstacle, if not a dead end. "We cannot do that", said the municipal planner when speaking of the idea of simply allowing the group to settle haphazardly. While studying Geography at the University of Namibia (UNAM), she learnt that a similar participatory dynamic had been tried in Oshakati. The case in question was the Oshakati Human Settlement Improvement Project (OHSIP), that took place in the early 1990s as a partnership between the Namibian Government and the Danish cooperation agency IBIS (see 4.2.3 above); the project had relied strongly on inhabitants carrying out the objectives. In fact, during our interview she could not even recall the full name of the project, but she remembered clearly that what struck her at that time was the possibility of co-production of municipal services. She did not learn 'a method' from that course, but only a basic notion. Her common sense later convinced her that something similar could be done in Windhoek: "through trial and error, we peg[ged] that entire block", she remembers. Municipal land surveyors did contribute, but only to demarcate the outer boundary of the block. It was the inner demarcations that were 'informally demarcated'; she remembers: "[we] took anything basic [...] any other little thing solid, [...] iron rod or something that we could use as pegs". What seemed to make her recall the experience with pride was not only that the job was done, but *how* the process was undertaken: "we [city officials] did that with the community members [...] without any basic training". The imprecise nature of the subdivision would require further adjustments later in the process, but the general purpose of keeping the process flowing was met. Perhaps more importantly, this was done through a process that had the virtue of allowing Municipal professionals and

inhabitants to work shoulder to shoulder. After this exercise, the group settled on the land in 2001 by constructing shacks.

5.1.4. *Water and sewerage: dual narratives, division of labour between Municipality and inhabitants, and self-help as training.*

Once the land was cleared and demarcated, the Municipality came to install two toilets and two communal water points. Recalling the moment when the installation happened, the group leader explains that the two toilets were installed “for men and for ladies”. The municipal planner, on the other hand, stated that two toilets and two water points were installed because, although the area seemed to be only one single unit, it was administratively two blocks of land, each entitled to its own services. Having these initial assets and the subdivision of the plot, the group moved on to the next step and applied for water and sewerage reticulation. When they did so, the group leader recalls that “at that time there was a very wise white man there at the Municipality[’s water department]” who helped with the drawing of the plans. However, since the “informal demarcation” did not yield a detailed map with measurements, the group was asked to take measurements. The group leader recalls making a kind of deal: “he draw the plan [...] I measure all the measurements”. The group then went to the town of Okahandja, 70km north of Windhoek, to buy the necessary material for the water reticulation; presumably because they would find it at a cheaper price there. For that, members had to make an additional individual contribution of N\$300 (today, about N\$800). The group leader undertook the plumbing work himself. He mentioned proudly that “until now, that pipe I have put in has no problem”. He had worked before in gardening and had only some basic plumbing skills at the time. The significance of his experience is that it was then when he started doing this job professionally and independently; he now has a plumbing company. Taking the individual case of the group leader, the water and sewerage installation was not only a step in attaining a plot of land and a house, but also skills and a job.





Figure 14 Photographs of the houses where the two original sanitation facilities and water connections were established (top), and one of the original temporary structures erected when the group settled that is still in use by one of the households in the back of the house that was built (bottom).

5.1.5. The house: *the institutional experience*.

At this point, members had been living in shacks for almost four years. The group then decided to build houses, and for this purpose they applied for a loan through the Build Together Programme (BTP) (see 4.1 above). They were eligible for N\$20,000 per household¹⁸. The group leader tells me pointing at his own house with pride: “this house is from twenty thousand, as you see now”. After accessing the loan, and thanks to their savings, members were able to add on to that amount, which allowed them to build slightly bigger houses than the so-called ‘Build Together houses’. The group knew that the house designs had to be approved by the Municipality, so the Committee approached them for help. A sympathetic Municipal worker referred them to his wife, who drew up plans for municipal submissions. The group leader attributes the ease through which the plans were approved to the fact that this woman was married to a Municipal worker. However, upon inspection, one finds that the design was simple enough to easily pass official scrutiny. Approval was granted, and having the funds to go ahead, the group had now to sort out the building of the houses.

Dibasen opted to hire builders for the task which was a different strategy from other self-help groups who help with construction themselves. They did, however, purchase materials in bulk, which allowed them the possibility to bargain. Committee members arrived at a large well-known construction materials outlet, and introduced themselves as a group, not as individuals. Partly owing to the amount of materials they required and, according to the land surveyor that assisted them, to the bargaining position as an organisation that they had with the construction company, they were able to obtain a discount on the materials. They also proved quite astute when dealing with the builders. They made contracts with them based on deliverables. The group leader explained: “if the builder has, for instance, built the foundation, then he has to be paid”, and so on; “it was in phases, from the bottom to the top”. The group, therefore, dealt with the construction of the houses of all members, but the responsibility entailed only the basic structure; “from there it must be from your pocket”, he said referring to common finishes (e.g. paint, tiling, fittings, etc.). The contracts,

¹⁸ While adjusting this amount for inflation today, it would represent approximately N\$54,000; the amounts that the Programme offers remain largely stagnant.

however, did not prevent every challenge, and the group leader recounts how they had to chase the builders to complete some of the tasks; he remembers this phase as “a very difficult time”. It is not uncommon for builders, particularly small and/or informal companies, to do one job and then leave without finishing, even if they had been paid. But thanks to their contract, there weren’t major losses. The group now had the experience of performing the role of employer, something that for many members was a first-time experience.

All houses were built according to the blueprint that the group purchased, but this proved to be only a starting point. The group leader recounts that this was in some way a decision: “we have decided in the beginning that all houses must be the same”. While it is unclear how they could have done otherwise, it seems there was a will for equality despite possible diverging needs in terms of the number of rooms or other individual preferences. In actual practice, some houses appear to have been built differently from the onset (see Figure 15). Other alterations have been made subsequent to the completion of the original structures: verandas, garages, boundaries between plots (made of corrugated sheet iron, mesh, or prefabricated concrete modules), some eventual razor wire fence for additional security, burglar bars, paint of various colours, roofs for car repair workshops, additional rooms for rent made of corrugated sheet iron and others of brick and mortar; the list continues. Many members cultivate gardens for decorative purposes, some others clearly take care of the trees in their plot. Altogether, by the time I visited, it was not easy to tell that these 48 houses had originally been built in the same way.



Figure 15 Photographs of house in Dibasen that was built with some modifications to the original plan.

5.1.6. Electricity and individual waste collection: *room for top-down approaches.*

Not every service needed to be negotiated or ‘co-produced’. This was the case for electricity installation and waste collection for the group. In the case of the latter, the group simply applied to the Municipality and obtained the individual ‘green bins’ for every plot. The logic of provision of this service should have followed the same principle as with other utilities: it should only be individualised after the individual ownership had been established. However, at this stage, the Municipality already had evidence of the individual households: the Build Together loan accounts, the individual water meters (see 5.1.9 below), and, soon enough, the electricity bills. Electricity is “the one service that the city is very strict on”, the municipal planner accounts. The Municipality keeps tight control over the electricity installation which is different from other services, such as water and sewerage. In a way, they keep control by making the installation process easy and efficient. This good service can be expected across the city: “it’s the same service they deliver for somebody in Kleine Kuppe¹⁹, [that] they want to deliver to somebody in the informal settlements”, notes the municipal planner. She recognised that the motivation for efficiency at the Electricity Division is to a large extent

¹⁹ Kleine Kuppe is a southern upper-income suburb, and residing there is popularly regarded as a sign of having achieved an affluent level of income.

motivated by the increase in the Municipality's revenue. To facilitate the process for the members, the municipal planner only had to provide some form of security to the Electricity Division that the users were legitimate. For this, the municipal planner recalls, they had to give them a plan, which had "numbers on, and right next to the numbers they would exactly [know] which household lives there, [including] their ID numbers, [and] the[ir] postal addresses"; she also mentions that this is a common practice now. Referring to the Electricity Division, she reckons: "that's one department where I think that the top-down approach doesn't bother anybody as much". The Municipality installed the electricity poles and the infrastructure, and in a short period of time, in 2006, all houses had an individual electricity supply.

5.1.7. Money and governance: *tests for collective action*.

Obstacles did not only arise because lack of funds or external pressures, but also from within. According to the type of bank account that the group opened, three different members were required to deal with transactions²⁰. During the construction of the houses, one of the builders claimed a payment for work done, and money was withdrawn in order to pay him; however, the payment to the builder did not take place. The Treasurer of the group was in charge of overseeing the construction and it was also her that was in charge of delivering the cash payment. The treasurer, who also happened to be a religious leader, had unfortunately misused the money. When members found out, the leader called for a meeting to address the situation. One of the important factors was that the Municipality was also called to that meeting for advice, the Municipal worker took a conciliatory approach and encouraged the group not to lose their focus. While eventually the bills were settled with the builder, and the situation within the group was sorted out, the recovery process took some time.

Referring to another incident that happened more recently with regards to alleged misuse of Committee's funds, the group leader admits: "money is a problem". The events seemed

²⁰ Regulations vary, but some banks allow two to four members to have signing powers for the funds in the account to be transacted (Bank Windhoek, n.d.).

to have put the group's cohesion to the test. Ironically, it was the lack of funds to access land and housing that brought the group together; now it seemed that it was the availability of funds that threatened the very existence of the group. Retrospectively, this proved to be one of the most challenging moments for the long-term leader of the group. During that time, his mother had passed away, and he had to excuse himself to help with the funeral arrangements. The recent misappropriation of funds by the treasurer left a general sentiment of mistrust that had not yet dissipated. While he was away, a member received a call from the woman who had drawn the plans; this member then started spreading the claim that the woman had not been paid, and that the group leader had misappropriated the funds for the funeral. Whether the woman simply called to inquire whether the payment had been made or for other reasons is unclear, but the group leader had to neglect his mother's funeral arrangements and go to show the members the receipt that proved that the payment had been made and that no funds were misused. The ensuing mistrust that some members appeared to have towards their long-term leader was a wound that would take time to heal, if ever.

The group leader is aware that leadership responsibilities can be a heavy burden. The distrust that came after the missing funds took a heavy toll on the motivation of the group leader to continue working for the group: "I then decided I do not want any more to be a leader". However, according to the constitution, leaders are elected, and this was therefore not up to him to decide. In seventeen years of existence, the same leader has been elected every single year but one. That year in which he was only vice president, a group of women, who according to him were "making problems" campaigned and elected a new leader. However, this person resorted to him repeatedly for advice and the leadership eventually proved to be too much of a heavy task for this member. Perhaps not coincidentally, he subsequently left the group and sold the house for a small fraction of the value that the property was gradually acquiring (see 5.1.12 below). The long-term group leader attributes some of his leadership skills to his commitment to improve himself, some occasional help²¹

²¹ The group leader recalls a previous employer giving him some books on leadership as a gift.

and training²². However, he lays particular emphasis on the fact that he was basically in the same situation as the membership he represents. He elaborates:

“you should not have a house somewhere [else apart from that acquired through the group]. If I have a house somewhere, you will misuse what you have here [...] misuse this people’s monies. So you also as a leader must not have something.”

By saying this, the group leader suggests that being in the same socioeconomic situation as his membership is important. The municipal community worker mentioned that he can “only attribute the success [of the group] to the good leadership”. He elaborated on what is meant by ‘good leadership’: being “firm in terms of leading the group in accordance to the constitution”. The difficult experiences the group leader underwent seem to have strengthened him personally and by extension also benefitted the group as a whole.

5.1.8. Beyond housing: *Rent, local economies, and entrepreneurial lessons*

The group leader observes that today “most people” in the group have rental units. Almost half of the houses have units for rent in Dibasen. The group leader himself rents the main house in the front of his plot for N\$4,000 per month and lives in a backyard structure with a toilet of its own. This rental income has allowed him to register his own company and focus on developing it. He admits that there is a lot of competition for plumbing businesses in Windhoek, but he at least finds time to sit and fill in the forms required to submit tenders. Informal rentals have been useful for the group at this stage, as they have helped members to pay the installation of services “quickly off”, as the group leader recounts.

²² The group leader mentions he received a training in leadership from the City of Windhoek, for which he obtained a certificate.





Figure 16 House of the group leader's house in Dibasen

Entrepreneurial activities, which in principle are a positive matter, may turn out to have a mixed effect on households without some form of support mechanism. The group leader observes that “if you don’t have or know how to do business, it’s a problem”. He accounts how some entrepreneurs agree to sell on credit, but do not get their money back thereafter. He reasons that this is why many people prefer rentals: “if you rent somebody, then you know”, arguing that it is easier to collect rent than repayments on items bought on credit. But while rent may be easy to collect, it does not seem to guarantee a direct benefit to the household. Referring to a member renting “a lot of houses” behind his own house, he notes how this income does not automatically effect improvements to the household. The group leader is frank about the reasons behind this: “he drinks the whole money”, presumably referring to the head of household. He also shared the case of another household whose member went to Angola to work and returned with a significant amount of money: “he is the guy who first renovated his house”, but currently his household seems to be in a distressed economic situation. Whether the situation would have turned out differently if the households in question had received some form of management skills is an open question. What can be observed, however, is that additional streams of money have different effects according to the individual characteristics of the various households.

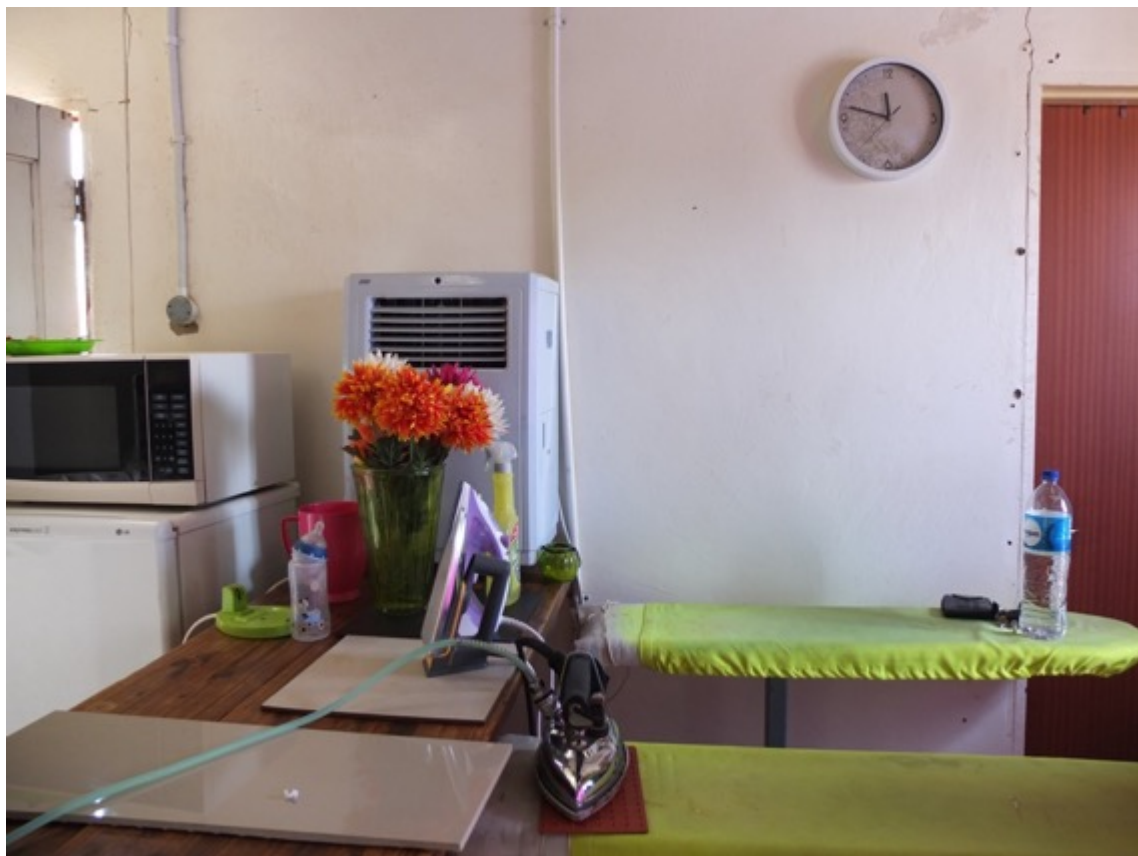






Figure 17 Photograph of businesses in Dibasen; a tailor (top) and a laundromat (bottom). The owner of the latter has also built rental units in her plot.

5.1.9. Individual water meters: *expanding the individual domain*

“The most problem was the water account”, says the group leader referring to the situation with regards to the collective nature of the water bills at the beginning. Not every single household would be equally punctual in their payments. In addition, water usage varied for every household, but the account was paid in equal parts and this caused significant tensions within the group: “we were fighting over water”, he remembers. Furthermore, the penalties for the lack of payment would only aggravate the situation: “you cannot force somebody, [so] we decided to close the water taps”. In 2006, members decided to apply for individual water meters. The group was in a weakened financial situation because of the funds that went missing during the construction of the houses. This pushed them to request funds from unlikely institutions, including the American Embassy, with no success.

Installation of individual water meters represented a costly endeavour²³ which, at that point, having the commitments of several recurring monthly expenditures (e.g. Build Together loan, rates and taxes) was not easy for every member to afford.

The Committee then turned to the Community Development Division at the Municipality, and explained that they did not have funds to do this, but that individualising the water accounts was necessary to overcome the difficult social situation. They reminded the Municipality that their accounts were in order: “we don’t have money [but] our account is up to date”. In support, the Community Development Division wrote a letter to the Water Division stating the nature of the situation and the good standing of the group. This turned out to be a moment for innovation within LAs as a financing system was developed in which the once-off installation of the individual water meters would be spread out as micro-payments embedded in the periodic water charges. In this way, every time a member made a payment for water, he would in effect be paying for two things: water use and the financed individual water meters. The group leader explains that this was simply a measure that allowed them to overcome a challenge. However, the Municipality is particularly proud of this moment in the process: “[this was] one of the most remarkable things that we [the Municipality] have assisted them with”, remembers the Municipal community worker.

This episode included also a technical glitch that caused delays in the process. Ordinarily, water meters read the consumption of an individual property in order for the cost to be included in the Municipal bill. The committee, however, requested individual pre-paid meters, which would work in the same way as the pre-paid systems that are commonly used in collective water taps in informal settlements²⁴. They did this, because of the popular stories about households being evicted owing to lack of payment of municipal services: “I think that scared them a bit and that’s why they wanted pre-paid options”, recounts the municipal planner. Evictions caused by lack of repayments is a tool that LAs sometimes employ as a last resort to get some money back for the services provided. Although evictions due to lack of rates and taxes repayment are public knowledge, the extent to

²³ Accounts vary, but it seemed that at the time of application in 2007, this amount was somewhere between N\$2,000-2,500 per household; about N\$3,580-4,480 in today’s terms.

²⁴ In some LAs, inhabitants of informal settlements are issued with magnetic keys that can be loaded with funds so that water can be collected at the communal water taps.

which this recourse is employed is not well documented²⁵. However, the municipal planner recounts, the specifications of the system were very complex. For a start, the main device was imported from the Netherlands, which had sourced some parts from Japan. It took some time for the Municipality to get this system sorted out, which caused delays that were particularly damaging considering the tense social situation that the collective water account was causing in the group. The Municipality could only offer technical accounts for the reasons of the delays, which generated a perception that the Municipality was reluctant to provide the service. The municipal planner clarified that it was not “a case of it [the service] cannot be provided, but *what* would be provided”. Eventually the system was put in place and when the Municipality made the first tests, it appeared that the system worked. However, a few weeks after, the group reported that the devices were not working well. It was then when the Municipality decided to install ordinary individual water meters. This episode proved to be one of the least problematic between the committee and the local authority. However, the technical considerations, which in this case were even subject to international supply chains, were threatening the internal dynamics of the group and putting strain on the relationship between the group and the municipality.

5.1.10. The power of transfer: *faculties of eviction and inheritance*

It was through the challenges in getting members to pay for services that the membership discovered one of the most powerful devices in housing transactions: the possibility of eviction. When the group still had a collective water account, the group leader recalls how some members would be indifferent when asked to pay arrears: “you can go and make what you want”, he would get as an answer. The association has to date evicted eight members from the land owned by Dibasen. In some instances, they had to resort to the police to give the eviction notice; but they were only asked to be present as a sign of authority, rather than to act. In contrast to the uneven situation that this degree of power may lead to, these evictions in fact demonstrate the degree of fairness through which the

²⁵ A simple search in the main newspaper’s website showed that news on evictions due to lack of payment of municipal bills was documented as recently as one month before the time of search (The Namibian, 2017b). This situation, note however, is a pressure that we have elsewhere documented elsewhere such as the case of domestic workers, who are within the lowest-paid income groups (Delgado, Namupala & Lühl, forthcoming).

group conducts itself. “The things that he has done on the house, we give him back”, the group leader clarifies. The committee would repossess the land but reimburse the departing member for what she has spent on improvements if she is able to produce evidence of this (e.g. slips, invoices, quotations), but also deducting from this any outstanding debt owed to the committee. The available house is then ‘sold’ to an incoming member, and the ‘profit’ is divided between all members with the objective of covering some of the debts. However, members were free to use these funds as they saw fit, and some indeed spent it elsewhere; but members have largely used these funds to pay off their debts. In one case, an evicted member took the group to court, but the court decided in favour of the group. As the municipal planner recalls: “they did everything by the book”. The possibility of eviction is in this case a demonstration of cause-and-effect that has helped the committee to assert authority on grounds of fairness, without the negative connotations of unequal power relations that are associated with the act of eviction.

One of the moments that has been unanimously identified by the various stakeholders as pivotal was when the committee was able to secure the land tenure for the children of a deceased member. Since the group came together in the late 1990s, about four original members have died. The Municipality has adopted a compassionate policy of writing off whatever debt a deceased debtor may have accrued as is also the case for the Build Together loans. However, in one case, the deceased member was a woman with four children and the oldest son was still legally a minor. Several family members suddenly ‘appeared’ and started to make claims over the land and the house. The group leader remembers the deceased’s father and another female relative to have been particularly insistent on taking over the house and he recalls that “the family was fighting”. However, the committee was clear that the priority for them was that the children of the deceased member were protected, so they intervened in the discussions to announce that the rightful owner was the oldest son and that only one adult family member would be allowed to move in and only with the purpose of taking care of the children until the older brother turned 18. The deceased member had worked hard to transition from life in a precarious informal settlement to a point where she had a house for her children to inherit. The group leader remembers telling the quarrelling family members: “we don’t care about you, you [were] not here when this lady was struggling with this kid”. And so it went; the son grew up, took

over the household, and later married. He now lives elsewhere in Windhoek and rents out the house. However, he did look after his brothers and sisters and the story provides evidence of how the committee was able to use its faculties based on the ownership of the land to administer justice.



Figure 18 Photograph of the beneficiary family. Courtesy of Josef Hoxobeb.

5.1.11. A 'small state': *the constitution and regulating everyday life*

The constitution is one of the key devices that has helped the association to frame its governance. A remarkable aspect of the neighbourhood is the absence of *shebeens* in an area that borders arguably the most famous concentration of *shebeens* in Windhoek along Eveline Street (SLF, 2017). "There is no selling of drugs and alcohol" in the neighbourhood, says the group leader. However, this doesn't mean that consumption is banned, and he admits that members or their family members do visit Eveline Street and then sometimes return to their houses and fight. If the situation takes place within the house, then "it's not the problem of the committee". However, "it is the problem of the committee if it gets worse". This appears to be an issue affecting particularly the younger members of the

households, and there have been situations that have indeed affected the social environment. In one such case, the committee approached the member and said: “if you don’t talk to your kid again, we will suspend you and evict you”, recalls the group leader. This approach appeared to have worked. Despite admitting that now there seems to be some informal sale of beer in one of the houses, “you don’t see them playing or doing anything wrong because they know [...] we are not finished [with the process, referring to the outstanding freehold titles]”. The municipal community worker sees the respect for the “rule of law” as a key factor of success of Dibasen. By this, he refers to “the group adhering [to] and observing and living by their constitution” and observes how the group’s leadership has been exemplary in applying that. While not explicitly prohibited in the constitution, the ethics of the group have demonstrated the discouragement of excessive consumption and sale of alcohol. However, the degree to which this social contract actually benefits the commitment to saving or in participating in the group’s activities is something that remains an open question.

5.1.12. Individual title deeds: *the ‘final task’ of Dibasen as organisation?*

Subdivision for individual tenure is the beginning of the end for Dibasen. In 2008 the committee initiated the process of attaining individual freehold titles for each member. They communicated this to the Municipality which informed them that this had some administrative implications for the payment of the accounts. As explained earlier, utility accounts would be individualised according to the ownership of the property, but in the case of Dibasen the local authority made a special arrangement in that they ‘froze’ their account in order to transition to fully individualised accounts. However, the most immediate obstacle was the fact that plots were slightly smaller than 300 m², which required ministerial approval for the subdivision. Another challenge was that the professional input that was required for this process was very costly. This took the committee to various places and it had to deal with an extraordinary array of stakeholders. At the time of writing, the process remains on-going, but it is likely that in the coming months the members of the group will attain individual title deeds.

The first issue that needed to be addressed was a dispute of boundaries between members. Some disputed the extent of their plots, and although the claims came from members who were known for being difficult, the matter had to be addressed. The Municipality was called in to solve the matter and it sent out land surveyors, who clarified that the claims were actually unfounded. As witness in the matter, and to provide additional officialdom, the City Police was called to be present on the day that the issue was discussed. The municipal planner recalls that this was not simply for ceremonial purposes, but it was important to “kill the argument there and then”. Matters of boundaries in property can give way to emotional disputes, and the municipal planner realised that they needed to act “before it escalate[d]”. A land surveyor would eventually help the group to deal with some of the matters that the informal demarcation left only partly addressed. He would also assist the group with some detailed measurement of coordinates, which would later prove useful when drafting the final layout. The group leader reports that the land surveyor would also help with overall advice, and he resorted to him for matters beyond merely surveying. The matter was resolved and the event served on the one hand to prove that the troublesome members’ claims did not hold much truth, and on the other, it helped to make this the last dispute on boundaries that the group experienced.

Although the process of obtaining individual titles started officially in 2008, the motivation for this step appears to have originated for various reasons and at different points in time. The committee had been continuously assisted by planners and surveyors, who coached members and provided services in their specific area of expertise. The group leader struggled to identify when the actual need for attaining titles had emerged, or to outline the concrete benefits. However, once this point was explained to him by professionals assisting the group, he recalled thinking: “I am not going to leave these things [out]”. The municipal planner could not recall where the exact motivation for seeking individual tenure originated, but she reflects:

“I think they were secure, the tenure was secure [...] they said they’ve got everything now. They got all the services that they basically need, they have got their houses, so they wanted to attain individual ownership.”

Another factor may be that members understood that by attaining individual ownership the committee would be in effect terminated. The municipal planner confirms this by stating that “they wanted to disband the committee”. The desire for individual tenure was, therefore, more of an option presented to the group and less of a motivation arising from a specific need identified by the group. However, once the benefits were understood, they decided to pursue this course. In this sense, titles appear to be more of an abstract ‘need’ than water or electricity, but the benefit promised to yield very concrete returns.

After the issue with the boundaries, the group realised that the challenge was something that it had not noticed or bothered them until that point, namely that the individual plots within the two blocks of land were smaller than 300 m². However, the subdivision of land into individual plots smaller than 300 m² is a common practice in informal settlement upgrading and former labour hostel redevelopments in order to lower costs of municipal fees, avoid displacement, and avoid fragmentation of support structures for inhabitants. There is legal provision for approving smaller plots through approval from the Minister of Urban and Rural Development (MURD). The committee obtained this information from the Municipality and were advised to start the application with the Minister. They requested a meeting with the Minister himself and “surprisingly”, the municipal planner recalls, the Minister did not have any objections but advised the group to consult further with the Municipality. In actual fact, the Minister had the power to give approval then and there, but it appeared that he did not want to take the decision without consultation with the Municipality. The reasons why the Minister referred the group to consult to the Municipality is unclear, but it may be caused by frictions between the two institutions. This was the first step in what would be the longest chapter of their collective struggle.

The committee approached again the Municipality to deal with consultation, but the institutional climate within the Municipality was changing. The municipal planner recalls the task: “we had to now prove that even less than 300 m² could [...] allow an ideal family house [to be developed]”. Reflecting on that episode, she mentions that there was in reality “nothing to be proven”, She argues: “they have been living there for a decade, they have got all the services, what do we need to prove?” In addition, there was a ‘turn’ in the 2000s where the attitude of the Municipality towards self-help groups changed. The municipal

planner remembers: “there were major issues with the self-help housing groups that were there”. The municipal community worker also mentions that “groups were becoming too many” around the 2010s. The key setbacks with groups then were that many did not abide by their constitution and that leadership often misused their powers and because of this the Municipality faced challenges with repayments. However, by the time the change in attitude took place, the Municipality had already approved the sale of the two blocks of land to Dibasen and was also in a working relationship with other groups. Therefore, it could not simply pull out from on-going engagements, but it could minimise involvement. However, the Municipality already knew the group and considered them “relatively good clients”, the municipal planner recalls. She describes this perception as ‘relative’ because sometimes they had problems with the payments, but “two missed payments, does not really take away the *bona fide* status”, she adds. What worked in favour of the group, according to her, was that despite the general attitude change towards self-help groups, “the City trusted them because of previous experiences”. The group was, therefore, able to weather the changing situation and receive the attention they needed from the Municipality.

At the same time, without members being fully aware, the value of Dibasen’s houses was rising considerably simply by the sheer increase in house prices in Windhoek (see 4.1.4 above). The committee and the Municipality started the process of preparing their response to the Ministry by asking the land surveyor to prepare a formal layout from the ‘informal demarcation’ exercise the group had conducted with the municipal planner in 2000. At this point, the land surveyor estimated the value of the properties in 2008 to be N\$150,000. Considering that houses were built only four years earlier with a BTP loan of N\$20,000 and some other additional funds, this meant that their property’s value had increased almost six times. This estimate was only informal and did not consider the costs of other improvements. However, more recently, a valuation that the group leader commissioned for his property placed the value of his house at N\$460,000. Adjusting this value to 2004 figures and comparing it to the value of the BTP loan in 2004, this means that the property’s value had increased 12 times. The municipal planner highlights the relevance she sees in this: “it gave somebody that had nothing a decade ago an asset that they can take to the banks [...] to secure a loan [...] so that they can send their kids to university”. This was a powerful argument that the municipality put forward in their submission to the Ministry.

However strong this evidence was, these were many other matters that needed to also be substantiated.

The major delay within the Municipal consultation came from the traffic engineers. The road had to be formalised, and to achieve this, approval from the engineers who specialised in traffic and storm water drainage was required. The street connecting the plots measured only 8m in width, which did not allow for a two-way road. This was resolved in a rather simple manner by making the road a one-way loop. The informal layout also had to be adapted on the north-east area of the northern block to get two plots of land to have access through a 'right of way' arrangement with two plots. In terms of the Local Authorities Act, one cannot create plots of land that do not have access to a street. Although this seems to be a rather common-sense regulation, for the street to be 'approved', it needs to meet standards that qualified engineers need to verify. Without this, even if the road is materially there, it cannot be declared as such, and the plots of land cannot be formalised. The municipal planner recalls: "if the engineers did not give approval for that street, the whole project would have stalled". This technical issue was resolved after a number of processes that were technical in nature; political issues would, however, follow.

The decreed minimum plot size in Namibia has recently become one of the key bones of contention between professionals and politicians. Reflecting on the issue, the municipal community worker comments that this standard is equivalent to say that "if you cannot afford 300 m², you will never own a residential property here in Namibia". While council resolutions are informed by technical decisions, the council's constitution and their deliberations are of a political nature. The Municipality's submission for subdivision for the Dibasen plots to the Ministry needed to be accompanied by a council resolution in order for it to be official, and therefore the council needed to be engaged. The 'technical' requirement of minimum 300 m² plot sizes itself originates from a political decision in the early 1990s (see 4.2.2 above). Discussions about this issue, especially when requesting exemptions, raise heated ideological debates. The Municipal Council at that time did not support the creation of plots smaller than 300 m². The perception was that agreeing to 'a lower standard' meant supporting inequality. The municipal planner recalls being subjected to grave accusations: "they said that we as town planners are bringing back the old

Apartheid-style planning”. This episode was apparently a lengthy back-and-forth between the council, the planners, and the group. The councillors had in fact visited the area and met with the committee in the context of a tour organised by the technical department. The planners, who participated on the project from the onset and who invested considerable time in supporting the group, presented the evidence in favour of the project. On the other hand, “councillors maintained that they know their constituency and [that they] would not want small erven”, recalls the municipal planner. Councillors, however, would eventually agree, and the matter was deliberated on in the following council meeting in 2012.

Various matters were resolved in the Council Resolution 416/11/2012 (to read council resolution, see 9.7 below). The resolution in fact clarified a long list of items that are not all described in length in this account, as some were technical in nature and others were not referenced by the interviewees as relevant. Some of these related to the rezoning of the two blocks of land from ‘private open space’ to ‘general residential’, the ownership of the sewer and water lines, cadastral changes, among others. The list outlines spatial changes that, in the cases of density, roads, and ownership, contain a significant amount of iterations in a social process that has taken the group more than a decade to overcome. And although the council resolution waived some costs for the group, it was explicit that Dibasen would need to be responsible “for the statutory applications, land surveying and eventual conveyancing”. According to the calculations of the land surveyor, this would cost about N\$700,000 in 2012²⁶. The permission to enable the process was now granted, and although this was one of the most significant victories for the group, the funds to actually proceed with the application for individual titles were not available.

Raising the funds through savings would have taken the group decades. In addition to the time, households were already living independently in practice and, therefore, from the social point of view, it would have been difficult to re-convene members in a similar fashion to a decade before. Professionals had, until then, supported them largely on the basis of social responsibility. Professional fees are regulated (see 4.1.3 above) and it is not considered collegial practice to undertake a full commission for free or at a reduced cost.

²⁶ Today, this would be about 30% costlier with inflation.

Therefore, the committee resolved to fundraise to cover the outstanding professional costs in full. The municipal planner clarifies: “they don’t want things for free, but [...] it’s going to take them some time to save up [...] and by that time they save up, it will be maybe a million dollars that they need”. The first potential donor they approached in this fundraising campaign was central government.

When the committee approached central government for help, they did so less as a request for mere assistance, and more as a claim based on their merits. With the help of the various professionals that had been assisting them, the committee realised that their process was similar to that of an on-going government initiative to simplify obtaining title for low-income groups: the Flexible Land Tenure (FLT) (see 4.1.4 above). In short, the scheme aims at providing a form of tenure that low-income groups can acquire in a relatively easy manner, providing tenure security that can be gradually upgraded to freehold tenure. In practice, Dibasen roughly followed the steps that a group hypothetically applying for FLT would need to follow. If they had been in such a process, they would have already reached the final stages. On these grounds, the group would represent a useful case study for the FLT project; it therefore decided to approach the Project Manager of the FLT project. This project is being developed at the Ministry of Land Reform (MLR), with economic and technical support from the German Cooperation Agency (GIZ). Through the Project Manager, they obtained an audience with the then-Deputy Minister, who at that time was one of the most vocal political figures in government on land-reform issues²⁷. They explained the situation, and the Deputy Minister was convinced by their story. Soon after their meeting, the Deputy Minister visited the site and the group leader recalls: “he even come here to the site and he say ‘everything is true’”. He then agreed to support the application of the group.

Government support, however, proved to require more than a ministerial directive. Narratives on this episode differ, but accounts agree that an instruction was given from the Minister’s office to support the group as part of the FLT project. However, the staff working on the project, many of whom were German cooperation agency workers stationed at the

²⁷ Bernardus “Clinton” Swartbooi was Deputy Minister of Land Reform until he was fired by the President for failing to apologise for remarks he made in public. He has been a vocal politician in matters of social justice and particularly on the issue of land redistribution.

MLR, did not agree that the project's funds be used to support this particular group. In a letter dated in March 2016 and addressed to the committee, the application was denied by the technical support team. The group responded by asking for reasons for the refusal, and the matter seemed to have been reported back to the Minister, who understood this as defiance to a directive from his office. This seemed to have angered the Minister, who in turn summoned the parties involved to clarify the situation. In that meeting, the matter was not resolved, and was instead taken to the Office of the President.

The government worker drafted a letter to State House outlining the issue, very much in support of the group. Within a few weeks, the group received a phone call from the Office of the President. The group approached the municipal planner, the surveyor, and the municipal community worker for advice. The Office of the President sent two representatives, one of them a Special Advisor to the President himself, to meet with the group and hear their account. The municipal planner arrived also later to support the group and to provide additional argumentation. At that time, the municipal worker was already working as a university lecturer, but her commitment to the group motivated her to continue making herself available to the group. The representatives listened to accounts and returned to their office, vowing to communicate with the group or the professionals in case they required additional information. However, the group leader recalls that they left with a positive impression of what the group had achieved. Two months afterwards the committee received an invitation to State House.

The group leader recalls arriving to the meeting at State House and seeing four people in the room: on the one hand, the Special Advisor to the President who visited them, as well as another Advisor to the President; on the other, representatives from Old Mutual²⁸ and Standard Bank²⁹. The Office of the President had contacted the professionals who were helping the group, and concluded that they needed to find a sponsor for the two processes that required funding. The deal was straightforward: the financial institutions would sponsor the town planning fees and the legal costs. However, there was a caveat that

²⁸ Old Mutual is a private financial institution that started in South Africa, but which has now international presence and headquarters in London, UK.

²⁹ Standard Bank Namibia is one of the largest banks in the country and part of the Standard Bank Group, which is based in South Africa but with a presence in various countries in Africa.

required action from the group - Dibasen was required to amend their constitution to state that the beneficiaries would not be allowed to alienate their properties for a period of five years. The group leader did not understand this requirement fully, and as if he himself would not believe this could be possible, he recounts: “they [...] mean that we will make money when we get the title deed”. He decided to contact the municipal community worker for advice.

The matter, however, proved to be simpler than it seemed. The Municipal community worker knew the reasons why this condition was placed and explained that this was intended to benefit the group: “They don’t want to see people being assisted and then two, three, four months, [...] they’re going back to the street after they’ve sold the properties”. However, he clarified, that this could not be achieved through the constitution of the association, because once households attain individual freehold titles, the power of the constitution will effectively cease. The group leader understood this: “as a committee you cannot tell anybody when he’s having his own title deed ‘you can sell the house or you cannot sell the house’”. He recognises the implications of this in the governance of the group, but accounts on it in an accepting way: “when they get the title deed you have no more power over them [...] but you can perhaps advise them”. A meeting between the committee, the municipal community worker, and one of the Special Advisors was convened, and it was then decided to include a clause in the title deed instead to avoid sale in a period of five years. Apart from the clause in the title deed, the group leader, now conscious of the powers of individual titles, says he will be taking other preventive measures:

“I must also advise others not to sell the houses because of the title deeds. Some of the people will decide to sell the house and go to the farm, stay there. But it’s not a nice thing, because you will end up again in the shacks.”

Through this process, he has come to understand the definition of an asset, in contrast to merely having money: “money is just [...] money, if you didn’t use it in the proper way, it will vanish”. In this way, the concerns of the financial institutions were dealt with

administratively on paper, as well as *socially* through the advisory capacity of the group leader.

The background on why these two financial institutions were chosen reveals also a number of relevant connections. The Office of the President contacted the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Old Mutual Namibia who, coincidentally, was Director of the Department of Planning, Urbanization and Environment during the time that the group was established and at the early stages when the Municipality started to support it. Furthermore, it was during his tenure that the Development and Upgrading Strategy, which outlines how the Municipality is to deal with informal settlement upgrading, was developed. A further coincidence is that the municipal planner, who had supported Dibasen throughout, was working at the municipality under the leadership of the now-CEO of Old Mutual. The exact reasons why Old Mutual decided to support this initiative are unclear³⁰, but the municipal planner believes that her former boss would well understand the story of Dibasen. He would also recognise how the group would represent a kind of ‘best practice’ example worth supporting for learning purposes. On the other hand, Standard Bank has recently made the “Buy a Brick Project” their “first flagship corporate social investment initiative” (Standard Bank, 2015) to address the national housing shortage and mark their 100-year presence in Namibia. The proceeds of this corporate social responsibility (CSR) endeavour go to SDFN, and it can then be inferred that by supporting Dibasen, they would be branching out beyond groups federated under SDFN. It is only recently, during the time of writing, that the committee received official communication from Old Mutual confirming their support.

5.1.13. What comes next: *the end of the process, the end of the group.*

What follows from this stage onwards is relatively straightforward. The planners should provide a submission for the statutory bodies, and once the submission is approved, the lawyers can start preparing the registration of the individual title deeds. Yet, it may take some months beyond the timeframe of my research project. Although the way towards

³⁰ I reached the offices of Old Mutual CEO, and they requested me to send specific question; after I sent them, however, there was no further communication.

freehold tenure seems to be paved, the account until now has proven that unforeseen circumstances are more the rule than the exception. One of the key contributions that this case can offer for future research is the current socioeconomic profile of households, which can be compared with data collected in the medium term to see the effects of obtaining individual freehold title. For this purpose, I and a team at NUST have documented the socioeconomic situation of the group, which I have included and expanded on elsewhere (Delgado, van Rooi & Namupala, forthcoming).

Although it seems that the option of individual tenure was originally a suggestion presented to the group by professionals, it did appear that the timing for the group to disband will be timely. The committee has endured a significant number of ups and downs, successes and setbacks, and “they get tired, but they are still working”, the municipal planner accounts. At the time of writing, the committee was not holding regular meetings anymore. The group leader concedes:

“the people also don’t want to come to meetings [anymore]. I understand, all the accounts have been divided. Why come to the group? Nothing is there.”

The process of attaining individual tenure can continue to be managed by the committee leadership, as there is not much that requires collective action from now on. The municipal community worker concedes that “now that they have achieved their mission, it’s only fair for them to dissolve”. The purpose of acting collectively to attain land and housing as a low-income group has been, up to this point, achieved. Now, says the municipal community worker, they can live “freely like any other person”.

I asked the municipal community worker whether he believes that the collective spirit will be lost once individual freehold titles are obtained, but he responds that he does not believe social cohesion will be damaged. He states that he still foresees “individual people associating and co-existing [...] with one another in the same manner in which they lived [when] they were a group”. The purpose of the committee, from the onset, was neither to gather for ideological reasons, for a political objective, nor a desire to socialise. The municipal community worker stresses that: “the idea was to acquire land, have a roof over

your head, and that was it". Association "was only imposed by the economic challenge", the he adds.

The group leader realises the current position of the group: "now, we are dissolving". There seems to already be a plan on how to wind-up the committee. A practical matter would be to close the bank accounts, because he foresees that some money will be left there. He does not want to be held accountable for money gone missing, and therefore, on the day the banks accounts are closed, the group has a special plan: "that day we decided that we must have a party where we can divide the certificate [i.e. the title deed] to everyone" and that the "money which is left must be used [for the party] so that nothing can be there [left]". What is notable from these statements is how the committee is preparing for a concrete closure of their process.

5.1.14. Beyond the end: *composition, inter-group relations, replicability, and possibilities for an afterlife*

As mentioned earlier, the group originally associated because of the need for land and housing, but the fact that the majority speaks Khoekhoegowab (Damara-Nama) is something that professionals see as an inherent condition of the process. The formation of the group happened through word of mouth or, as the municipal planner calls it, "snowball referrals". However, when prompted to expand on the single-language nature of the group, the municipal planner, herself from a mixed-race background, argues that the general government approach to non-tribalism³¹ cannot be applied in a linear fashion to self-help groups: "Should we [...], for the sake of unity and diversity, say: 'break up as group and bring ten Ovambos and ten Hereros'? It's not our business to do that". She refers to the neighbouring groups to Dibasen: one being "entirely" made up of Herero speakers and another of a mixture of Nama and Basters. The latter is called the "Rehoboth Group", referring to the town that was once considered the 'homeland' for the Baster group³². She also recalls a time when city councillors were at the site of Dibasen, and asked why all the

³¹ Under the popular banner of 'one Namibia, one Nation', there is a drive to move away from the categories that the Apartheid administration emphasised. In Namibia, there are more than ten different cultural groups, many of which are themselves heterogeneous in nature and therefore difficult to classify under one banner.

³² See 6.

group members were only Damara-Nama speaking. The municipal planner explained that they are mostly Damara-Nama-speaking, but that there are also a few members from other 'cultural groups'. Reflecting on the pattern of groups associating along cultural/linguistic lines, she concludes that it is "maybe [...] because of our past that we don't want to see people congregating as Hereros or Damaras [...], but unfortunately [it] is happening", she concludes: "you affiliate [with whom] you know with kin, or whoever you understand".

Despite the tiring experiences of managing the group process, the group leader seems nevertheless open to assist other groups in their challenge: "I'm not afraid to give the support [...] to another group". He clarifies that this is because his capacity would be only that of advisor, because they "will elect their own committee and they will [be] run by their own committee". The nature of self-help groups does not really allow for 'consultancies', but rather for self-managed activities with occasional (often voluntary) support. He is currently helping the group neighbouring Dibasen's land; he calls it 'Dibasen 2'. He also sees the possibility of charging for advice, but right now he has only volunteered. What he does as a paid service is the plumbing installation for the neighbouring households and for the groups that have the funds to pay him. He sees various other groups forming which could indicate that this *modus operandi* is going to continue.

The case of Dibasen has also become a kind of 'school' for universities, municipalities, and professionals. The municipal planner, now a university lecturer, has taken her students to see how Dibasen has managed to plan and build their own space. She points out specifically how, in plots of less than the standard 300 m², households have been able to build household and rental units, which in turn has enabled them to sustain small local economies. She specifically emphasises the laundry business (see 5.1.8 above), which also includes a number of rental units. For students who learn about planning, this is a lesson on the contrast between their academic studies and actual practices on the ground. The Municipality has also used the lessons learnt from Dibasen in other settings. The municipal planner says that: "based on what we learned with this group, we actually did the same in major upgrades". Some of these were Freedomland, which is an informal settlement upgrading project in Okuryangava; other cases where lessons learnt from here were applied are Onyika, Babylon, Hakahana and, despite not being an informal settlement, also in

Khomasdal (see Figure 10). Housing groups gather throughout the city, and currently the Municipality is working on a database to map the various groups. Informal settlements can comprise various groups within it. In Windhoek, Freedomland has more than five groups, which consist of around 400 households. Some other groups contain numerous households; one of them, Huidare Group, is composed of 167 households. The municipal community worker affirms that Dibasen is “an example to other groups out there”. The municipal planner concurs, concluding that Dibasen “has become a sort of standard of how we [...] do upgrades in the city”.

As stated earlier, the municipal community worker attributed the success of the group to the good leadership. The municipal planner expands on other attributes: “they are very tenacious, [...] they are very professional too”. The committee did not only demonstrate this once, but continuously and this is why they have “managed to gain respect” from the various other institutions. Explaining her assertion, the municipal planner mentions that the group managed to keep their case at the top of the priorities of the Municipal workers without confrontation. Some groups seem to be “at loggerheads” with the City of Windhoek, sometimes resulting in legal battles. Prompted to reflect on whether the committee may have had specific skills that put them at an advantage in relation to other groups, she reflects: “I don’t think they’re any more educated than the other groups”. Continuity of the leadership may also be a factor, as well as their perseverance: “every time they get a negative answer, they want to ask you why”. The land surveyor agrees in that leadership and perseverance are two key factors in their success. They kept their conviction that they could obtain some assistance from the parties they were involving, including central government. She says this in a way that implied a certain surprise about how one relatively small self-help group could mobilise action from a large government institution. The municipal community worker reflects upon the significance of Dibasen and concludes that the group “is not really an exception, but I would rather say it’s an example”. He expands on why this is so: “they have just demonstrated that unity of purpose can work if properly managed.”

5.2. Oshakati: SDFN, nature, and the encroachment of communal land



Figure 19 Map of Oshakati with area in question marked

Someone who has only spent time in Southern and Central Namibia will be surprised how dramatically different 'the North' is when travelling there. Coming from the south on the road from Tsumeb, the environment changes significantly exactly at the point where one passes the so-called 'Red line'. This is the territory of the Cuvelai delta, which floods the north-central areas each year. From that point on, including a gradual change in fauna and flora, one also notices that the rationale of urban areas in the South ceases. Neatly-defined urban areas become instead a patchwork of seemingly scattered structures varying in frequency and density. Activity on the highway in the North is considerable, and one can guess that what is visible along the road stretches further into a busy hinterland. These agglomerations start gradually: firstly, some scattered buildings, then a few shops, which then turn into some form of 'high street' with services and perhaps some public facilities and then fade gradually into a landscape without buildings. Signs of habitation remain throughout: fences, pathways, and some intermittent structures and trade on the side of the road. The frequency and scale of such inhabitation patterns gradually increase in rhythm and scale until one reaches Ondangwa. The airport there is the main entry point for those flying to the North. The flights are costly, but turn the 680km distance from Windhoek into a 45min trip. At Ondangwa one can turn northwards and head to Angola or, as the vast majority does (Transport 4 People, 2016), continue west to Ongwediva and then to Oshakati, which represents for many 'the capital' of the North of the country.



Figure 20 Photograph of a residential area in Oshakati from one of the flooding pans.

As one transitions from Ondangwa, to Ongwediva and then Oshakati, the spatial patterns stand in stark contrast to the ones in the south and central parts of the country. One can find a luxurious house surrounded by agricultural fields and traditional homesteads. One often sees trucks carrying construction materials, or private cars transporting prefabricated plastic latrines on their roofs. It is evident that the place is busy, which is somewhat surprising given that there is no large-scale economic activity in the area, and agricultural activity is mainly small scale and subsistence-oriented. Social and environmental aspects can explain this, namely that the northern regions are still the most populated parts of the country (see 4.1.1 above), and receive more rainfall, which allows for generalised crop production. However, other aspects have to do with the fact that about half of the Namibian population speaks Oshiwambo, and the area is ‘the centre’ of Ovamboland. The circulation of money and goods between ‘the north’ and other urban centres in Southern Namibia, particularly Windhoek and the coastal towns, has been documented (see 4.1.4 above). The northern towns are currently growing considerably, and Oshakati is at the heart of this growth. Ovambo consists largely of ‘communal areas’ that have distinct land allocation mechanisms, which is a particular factor in the spatial patterns in ‘the North’.

This development nevertheless occurs under uneven conditions, which reproduces an underclass to service the more affluent: domestic workers, petrol station attendants, security guards, and other low-paid employees. They are, according to the Shack Dwellers Federation of Namibia (SDFN) coordinator based at Oshakati, the constituency that the Federation is serving. According to the most recent SDFN membership records, there are 32 groups in Oshakati, consisting of 567 members who have saved a total of N\$1,169,752. These members represent 43% of SDFN members in the Oshana region, which includes Ongwediva, Ondangwa, and some rural areas. The savings of Oshakati members represent 54% of the Oshana total. However, Oshana is only one of the four 'O-regions' that make up Ovamboland, and it would be misleading to judge its importance based only on the numbers within the urban area of these three towns, considering the sparse nature of settlements. Therefore, if one adds up the four regions, namely Ohangwena, Omusati, Oshikoto and Oshana, one finds that 24% of SDFN members nationwide are in this region, and their savings represent 30% of the national total. This is consistent when considering that these regions also contain 40% of Namibia's total population. In her account, the Federation coordinator does not actually single out Oshakati when speaking about her activities. She refers rather to the various groups that are active in 'the North' at large³³. The 'boom' of 'the North' presented in this section provides a glimpse of the fast pace in which the socio-spatial development takes place today.

The process documented in this section speaks about a plot of land that SDFN accessed in Oshakati through an application to the local authority. This is the first and only plot that the Federation has accessed in town, but they are currently in talks regarding access to other blocks of land elsewhere. The process started in 2002, but construction works actually started only in 2010. However, this case has the additional attribute of having encroached on communal land (see 4.1.1 above), which is now a common situation found in Oshakati's rapid growth. Therefore, the section includes an extended account on the origins of this process of encroachment. I documented this based on the testimony of the traditional land

³³ It is important to highlight that 'the North' also includes Kaokoland in the Northwest, which house mainly ovaHimba and Damara groups; in the Northeast, there are the Kavango regions and the Zambezi, which are home to various heterogeneous groups. But it is in these central northern areas where the various Ovambo groups are based, which in turn refer to these areas simply as 'Ovambo'.

owner on whose land the SDFN settlement is partly situated. This section makes less emphasis on documenting the SDFN process and the way it unfolds, and more on the specifics of the case of Oshakati. For this section I have interviewed the Regional Coordinator of SDFN; a traditional land owner; the Manager of Planning and Properties at the Town Council; an employee of the Support to Land Reform at the German Cooperation Agency; as well as the Co-Director, NHAG.





Figure 21 Aerial photos of the area in question, Kandjengedi South, at different points in time (from top to bottom, 2004, 2007, 2013, and 2017). Source: Google Earth.

5.2.1. The process of land development and the construction of houses

This process started between 2001 and 2002, when the Federation approached the local authority, Oshakati Town Council, for land for housing. The local authority made a piece of

land available in the area south of Kandjengedi through a permission-to-occupy³⁴ arrangement as the area had not been surveyed and proclaimed. The block is located in Extension 15, in the easternmost part of the town (see Figure 19). Although the area is already identified as such in the town planning scheme, it has not been planned or ‘formally’ surveyed. Furthermore the land belonged to a traditional homestead. It appears that the negotiations to occupy communal land from this homestead happened between the local authority and the then owner of the household before the Federation was brought in, but it was not possible to point out exactly what had happened. It was only at a later stage when the Federation started to engage with the traditional household for the purpose of negotiation when the situation became clearer. The support NGO drafted a preliminary layout that subdivided the area into 164 individual plots, accommodating the homestead as well as the existing structures around it (a fragment of these maps can be found in Figure 47 in 6.3.1 below). The process of surveying and local registration of the land took almost four years, and it was undertaken by the local authority. At that time, the Federation coordinator remembers that members’ savings were “not so strong”, so this time also gave members the opportunity to strengthen them which was further encouraged by the availability of land. A staff member hired by the Ministry of Land Reform (MLR) but stationed at the local authority, surveyed the perimeter of the area. Although the Federation coordinator affirms this was part of the Flexible Land Tenure (FLT) project, one of the German cooperation agency workers clarifies that this was not related to the project. The staff member might have done this merely as a favour to the group or at the request of the local authority to support the activities of the Federation. By 2006-7 the land was ready and the savings had grown, and in January 2008 the houses that the Federation proposed were approved by the local authority and it was ready to start construction.

However, just that year, there were heavy floods that prevented construction activities. Trucks could not navigate the area, and those which attempted to do so got stuck. Furthermore, the NGO co-director cited some conflict at the Council level that caused delays. It was only in 2010 that construction finally started. The land was cleared by the

³⁴ ‘Permission to occupy’ certificates have, in Namibia as in South Africa, a negative connotation as they are meant to emphasise the temporary nature of tenure for a group (‘blacks’) while at the same time others (‘whites’) were holding titles in perpetuity.

Federation members, who then also started saving to install communal water connections. Water was installed up to the block level, and then the groups had to organise for members to install the reticulation within the blocks. Additionally, once the water was installed up to each block, the waste collection followed “automatically”, the Federation coordinator says. Electricity was installed when the service was in any case scheduled to reach the Kandjengedi area. The Federation coordinator, when recounting how the group has accessed this service, regards that “it was not a problem”. The area continues to lack sewerage, so many have resorted to installing individual septic tanks. These are then periodically emptied by a private contractor, at a cost to each individual household. Each member was to sort out how they would build the houses based on the standard SDFN model house. Some could do it themselves with the help of relatives or a builder, and some simply approached a contractor to do all the work. There was one contractor who built several houses, but this happened through referrals. Someone commissioned him, and then referred him to the next household, and so until eventually the contractor realised the situation and offered that if he could get eight other members to commission him to build their houses, he would be able to provide a discount. Groups then organised quickly and seized this opportunity. In this way, the houses were built swiftly, without major delays.

Six different saving groups were the beneficiaries of these plots. Beneficiaries are SDFN members, but the register of beneficiaries is also at the local authority, which maintains its own ‘waiting list’ for land applicants. Members from those saving groups were living in different parts of Oshakati, not in one particular neighbourhood. Most are self-employed or cleaners, generally earning below N\$3,500 per month. However, by the look of some of the houses, some seem to have had access to additional funding. This may be through relatives, other household members, or an increase in their own income. However, the Federation coordinator cites as a current challenge the pervasive unemployment and the job insecurity of members, who are still repaying a loan for a period after 11 years. The group continues to work together, but many of the houses appear to be completed.



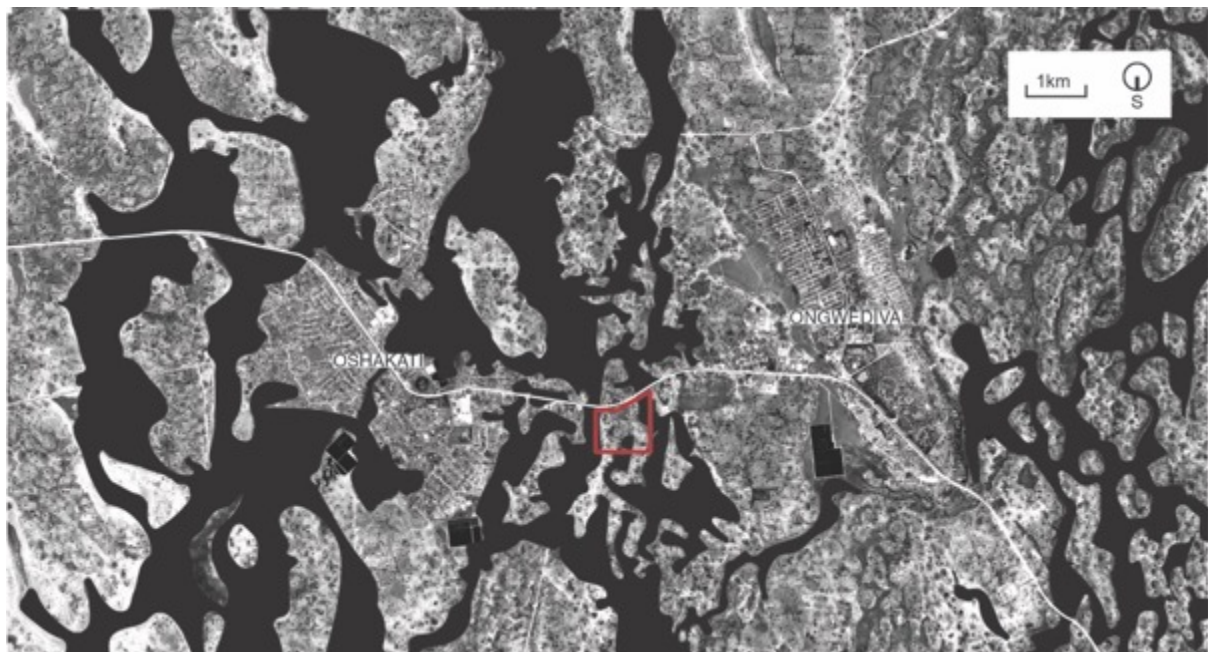


Figure 22 Photographs of houses in Kandjengedi South (top) and of the streets in the neighbourhood.

5.2.2. Nature and agriculture

Natural events have played a significant role in the sequence of events in Oshakati. Parts of Ovamboland, particularly Oshakati, are located in an area that regularly floods (see Figure 23). From the very beginning, the Federation was not able to start construction because of the floods that were particularly severe in 2008. After the construction of the houses, about six plots were flooded. The Federation clarified that it could not be held responsible for reimbursing damages because of the flood, as it is known to everyone that the site is bordered by two low-level areas that normally flood every year. The preventive measure taken regarding this was to build a higher foundation so that the water would not enter the houses. This, however, only adds 40-50cm of advantage, which may not be sufficient in all cases. On-going housing developments involve complex engineering works to pump out water and level the terrain, but even the newest development seem to be affected by floods (The Namibian, 2017c). The town is also gradually implementing a Master Plan which was

given to a Belgian office that proposed a system of dykes to control flooding in the larger Oshakati area³⁵. However, at the household scale, there seems to be no further innovations with respect to construction of housing in the flood prone area, or elsewhere in Oshakati. The Master Plan is currently being rolled out progressively, leaving many areas in town still prone to annual flooding.



³⁵ The project of a Concept Master Plan for Oshakati was commissioned to Ghent-based Bureau of Architecture in 2009 (BAR, 2016).



Figure 23 A photograph of recently-developed residential areas that subsequently flooded (top), a map of flood-prone areas (as indicated in the Concept Master Plan for Oshakati (BAR, 2016)) indicating Kandjengedi South (middle), and one of the houses in Kandjengedi South that was built with a higher foundation to avoid floods (bottom).

Another natural cause that seems to be delaying Federation activities has to do with agricultural cycles. The Federation was promised land in the area of Onawa, but this land has yet to become available because those living there had already planted *mahangu* (sorghum) for the year. The Federation coordinator says that once this crop is harvested in the dry season, they will be able to move ahead with clearing the land. The NGO co-director, on the other hand, suspects that this delay has other causes from the local authority side, as it has been there since 2013. The Federation coordinator is clear that its activities focus on urban areas, as in rural areas there are “different needs”: not land and housing, but sanitation, water supply, and fences. Oshakati, particularly its periphery, appears to be somewhere at the border between these two realms.

5.2.3. The changing nature of access to land: transacting the land and matters of tenure

Although the land is visibly and practically subdivided into individual plots, there is no actual subdivision that can be documented from the legal point of view. The Federation coordinator clarifies that the block of land is “owned by all of the members”, but acknowledges that they are still waiting for official acknowledgement of the status quo

“through flexible land tenure”. While the area is not officially part of the FLT pilots, the area may benefit once the FLT is eventually rolled out nation-wide. This, however, may still take several years considering that pilots are only now being rolled out. Perhaps related to this is the fact that land used for building houses is not very common in the area. Regarding rentals, the Federation coordinator says that there is currently not much demand. She clarifies: *“at the moment, the majority [...] are really in need of the house; not like those who get the house today, tomorrow you sell it”*. She also states that the Federation encourages an understanding of the collective ownership of the land at this stage: “we also make them understand that ‘you cannot sell, because this land does not belong to you, it belongs to all of us’”.

However, there are eventual situations of members that the Federation had to deal with. The Federation coordinator mentions they encourage members to make a will or to communicate to the Federation who the beneficiary should be in the case of death of a member. She clarifies at this point that that the most Federation members are women, and that it is almost always the children who are named as beneficiaries, or a known relative that can take care of the children. She mentions that there have been occasional cases of conflict, but that they have been solved in a “simple” way. There have not been any evictions in the block of land in Kandjengedi South. She attributed this to the commitment that group members show throughout the process, which is a sign that members will not neglect their commitments after they have been allocated the house. Members who are not good in saving show this through their behaviour - they stop attending meetings and/or save in an erratic manner. During the saving process, a member can indeed be expelled if she has not attended a meeting in the past six months. This gives an indication to the group regarding which members may be the best suited to take on the burden of the larger financial commitment of obtaining a house.

The Federation also has had cases where members need to dispose of the house. She could remember at least two cases where this happened. The first was a member who had a relative in her home village who needed additional care due to a medical condition. The member had to move to the village and rent out the house. The Federation coordinator could not confirm the amount; however, she recognised the usefulness of rental income for

this particular household. The second case was someone who had been offered a job elsewhere and had to move away and did not see the point of keeping the house in Oshakati. She also clarified that what was disposed of in this case was not the land, but only the house. The land, as mentioned earlier, remains managed by the Federation and owned by the town council. In both cases, the motivation was not speculation, but actual life circumstances.

The traditional land owner, on the other hand, had more fluid situations to deal with in terms of tenure. As we walk through his household, he explains the transformations that have taken place (see Figure 21). He also highlights how informal land deals in the area are so widespread that it has created an environment of suspicion: “even with you, those who don’t know whether this is an interview or not, they may think that we’re making a [land] deal [...] they are suspicious because they’ve been cheated many times”. He himself had to deal with a land claim a week before the interview, regarding a portion that was given away by his mother. However, he is not giving away land anymore: “Openly, and frankly, and fairly, I told them: ‘look, I have a big family here’”, he recounts telling those who have approached him regarding this. He also points at several structures around his household, explaining how there is a family connection to almost each one of them, and how each arrived there through a personal circumstance in life: divorce, retrenchment, children. The land subdivision and built structures reflect the contingencies of extended family life and how these are accommodated in space without the frame of ‘formal’ land management systems prevalent in the South, which relegate such events to ‘the informal’.



Figure 24 Photographs of household of the traditional land owner in Kandjengedi South: earlier structures (top), extensions for a guest house (middle), and structure for a future kindergarten to be run by a relative (bottom).

5.2.4. Local economies, rentals, and dispute resolution

There are very few businesses in Kandjengedi South, and only two are visible from the outside. The Federation coordinator is aware of some businesses inside the houses, even someone that has put up a *shebeen* in their living room. On the other hand, the households that were there before the Federation have built larger structures for such businesses. The Federation coordinator knows of several households that run informal food businesses, cosmetics, and second-hand clothes sales, but that then go to trade at the more centrally-located areas in town, particularly a market that was recently opened. There is one structure that operates as a kindergarten and another that functions as a crèche. While these two are run by members of the Federation, they still do so on an informal basis. There is also a church that was started on a piece of land that was occupied after the block was assigned to SDFN. According to the Federation coordinator, this happened because the member involved was apparently given permission by the traditional land owner. This person, she says, is allowed within the area but only after she finds alternative accommodation and as long as they “behave”. During my visits to the area, it was noticeable that there was not much pedestrian traffic and that an informal business would only make sense if the neighbours use it. At the moment, the area remains on the frontier of the town’s expansion, but this is a situation that may also quickly change.





Figure 25 Photographs of houses developed in Kandjengedi South

As far as the Federation coordinator is aware, there are currently no structures built for renting out. She notes that this is a common practice in other areas of town, but not on their land. In Kandjengedi South, some do give rooms to relatives on their premises, but it is unclear whether this would count as 'rental'. She mentions that as a Federation, the members do not want shacks, but says that they have no actual way of enforcing this. However, she stresses that building shacks on the Federation block is undesirable, "because the shacks is what we're running away from".



Figure 26 Photograph of mural at the SDFN offices in Oshakati, with the logo of SDFN showing the transition from 'shacks' to houses, as well as other aspects of the process.

In total, there are six saving groups within the block, and they engage with one another through the Federation process. Every six months there is a report-back meeting, for which each group compiles a report. There are also some issues that cannot be solved at the group level, which are then 'raised' to the network level. The Federation has also developed ways to deal with conflict in the group in a way that does not hinder social relations between members at local level. She puts as an example a case in which a group started to have problems in their performance. The Federation found out that there was one member who was particularly problematic, but her peers were afraid of denouncing her in public. They

proposed a method of ‘secret ballot’ where members would write the name of a person who was causing trouble within the group on a piece of paper and hand it over to the federation coordinator during their meeting. Through this exercise, the name of the culprit emerged and the Federation was able to deal with this in a legitimate way.



Figure 27 Photographs of the deliberation exercise identifying a problematic member through secret ballot.

5.2.5. Diverging accounts: Encounter between traditional land and the SDFN block

The traditional land owner took over the role of head of the household at a time when Kandjengedi South had already been considerably transformed. The land of the household used to be “the whole location”, he maintains. He became the head of the homestead after his mother’s passing in 2012; before that he was based in Windhoek. He found a situation where “most” land around him had been allocated to others. He points out different structures around his homestead, and says: “maybe they got land from my sister, or from a cousin, or nephew”. Expanding on how this might have taken place, he explains: “whoever was found in the house, sold and put money in his pocket” and mentions that he is even aware of cases where plots that have been sold twice to different parties. The situation was fluid, but as the one responsible for the homestead, he needed to set some boundaries.

The land of the traditional land owner and the SDFN block of land as drawn by the NGO, “almost overlap” he admits. According to him, he had to negotiate with them “to stop them where I don’t want them to go”. He also points at the fence on the north entrance of his household and mentions that SDFN wanted to put a house there, but he refused. The

structure would have closed access and the view to the north, and he also had other plans on what to do there in the future. He is currently gradually developing a 7-bedroom guest house. He reckons that there will be plenty of demand for it, owing to the increasing political and economic centrality of the town. He is also building a kindergarten for his daughter to manage. Until today, his wishes with regards to the demarcation of boundaries have been largely respected, even if this meant fewer plots for the Federation than in its original scheme.

The viewpoints on who is accommodating whom are diametrically opposed. On the one hand, the Federation coordinator explains how in the area there are members and non-members. When referring to the household structures around the traditional land owner's homestead, she mentions the people there were "squatting". She says that they have "integrated them"; however, she says so in a rather conciliatory way. She elaborates: "we couldn't not chase them away [...] we negotiate with them". They "don't also force them to become a member", so they are not part of the saving groups or the Federation. This means they are simply registered within the scheme, so that their land can eventually be 'formalised' with the others. According to her, these 'squatters' were relatives of "the previous owner" of the land. On the other hand, the traditional land owner is clear when referring to the Federation houses: "they're accommodated by us". His view is substantiated by his family ties to the land, that stretch back for a generation, which makes the Federation indeed seem as 'newcomers'. However, both sides admit that the relation is respectful, and no one reported any major disagreement up to now. As a sign of good will in their everyday relations, the traditional land owner says about his neighbours: "half of them drink here at the bar", and "many of them buy fish from my daughter, she sells from here". Despite these differences in views everyday life continues in a peaceful manner between the two sides.

5.2.6. What comes next

There remains still "a lot of work to do", the Federation coordinator reckons. She refers not only to the subdivision and titling, but also to material aspects of the houses that have been

built. She contends that some members are not interested in improving their house, “not even painting it”. She mentions the need to “educate” members to encourage them to continue working towards improving their places. She is also sensitive to the issue of repayment, considering that members still have the liability for 11 years and that groups accessed the loans in different years. Although some have already finished paying off their loans, it does not mean that they should stop saving. She outlines a number of reasons why this is so. Some members need to eventually borrow from the saving scheme to start a business, put up fencing, or even to assist relatives. In other words, the ‘improvements’ continue, but these may not necessarily be reflected in changes to the house.



Figure 28 Photograph of improvements made to original SDFN houses in Kandjengedi South.

Currently, the Federation coordinator and a colleague gained a position at the ‘Land and Housing Committee’ in the local authority. This committee evaluates and deals with land

applications, which the local authority manages. This will potentially give more visibility the issues of informal settlements. The NGO co-director observes that Oshakati is “not one of the strong towns in upgrading their informal settlements, instead they create new establishment”. He mentions a couple of occasions when the local authority has made a promise regarding upgrading, but there was not any action that followed. An internal challenge that the Federation faces, in particular, is the lack of understanding of the Federation process among their constituency. The Federation coordinator says that she is often asked the question “are you [the Federation] going to build the house?” to which she replies: “no, we build the people”.

5.3. Gobabis: 'city-wide' planning and informal settlement upgrading on a large scale



Figure 29 Map of Gobabis, with area in question marked

Arriving at Gobabis from Windhoek, one enters 'town' from the northwest. If one turns right on Church Street, the main east-west road, one arrives at 'old' Gobabis, where the main Municipality building, some historical sites, and other facilities are found. If one turns left, Church Street becomes something of a 'high street' common to urban centres in Namibia: shops, banks, food outlets, petrol stations, etc. To the South of Church Street is the 'low-density' (i.e. high-income) areas and the town's main hospital, while to the north one has the industrial area. Moving further east past the busiest section of Church Street, one may be mistaken for thinking that one is leaving the town. However, only after passing a stretch of bush veld and a golf course to the right, is when one finds two other neighbourhoods: to the south is Nossobville, the former 'coloured' township, and to the north there is a road that, after a few hundred meters, leads to another residential area. This is Epako, the former 'black' township. The area is divided into different sections, each originally destined for a particular 'racial' group but now bearing different names. The Tswana block is now called 'Sunrise'; the Ovambo location has become 'Independence Island'; the Mbanderu and Herero block are now called 'Tuerijandjera' whilst the Damara block is known as 'Freedom Square'.





Figure 30 Photograph of streets in Gobabis; a site where the installation of infrastructure is taking place; and the sign outside Epako (BSWittlich, 2013).

Epako is surrounded by informal settlements. While the Town Planning Scheme that was drafted in 2005 shows that the area should constitute approximately 15% of the town's fabric, the reality is that even before then, Epako already constituted about 35% of the town's fabric, and covered almost the same area as the 'low-density' residential areas. Today, the area of Epako, including its informal settlements, is equal in size to the old town of Gobabis *combined*, and more than twice the size of the 'low-density' residential areas. In other words, most of Gobabis is made up of low-income housing areas and informal settlements.

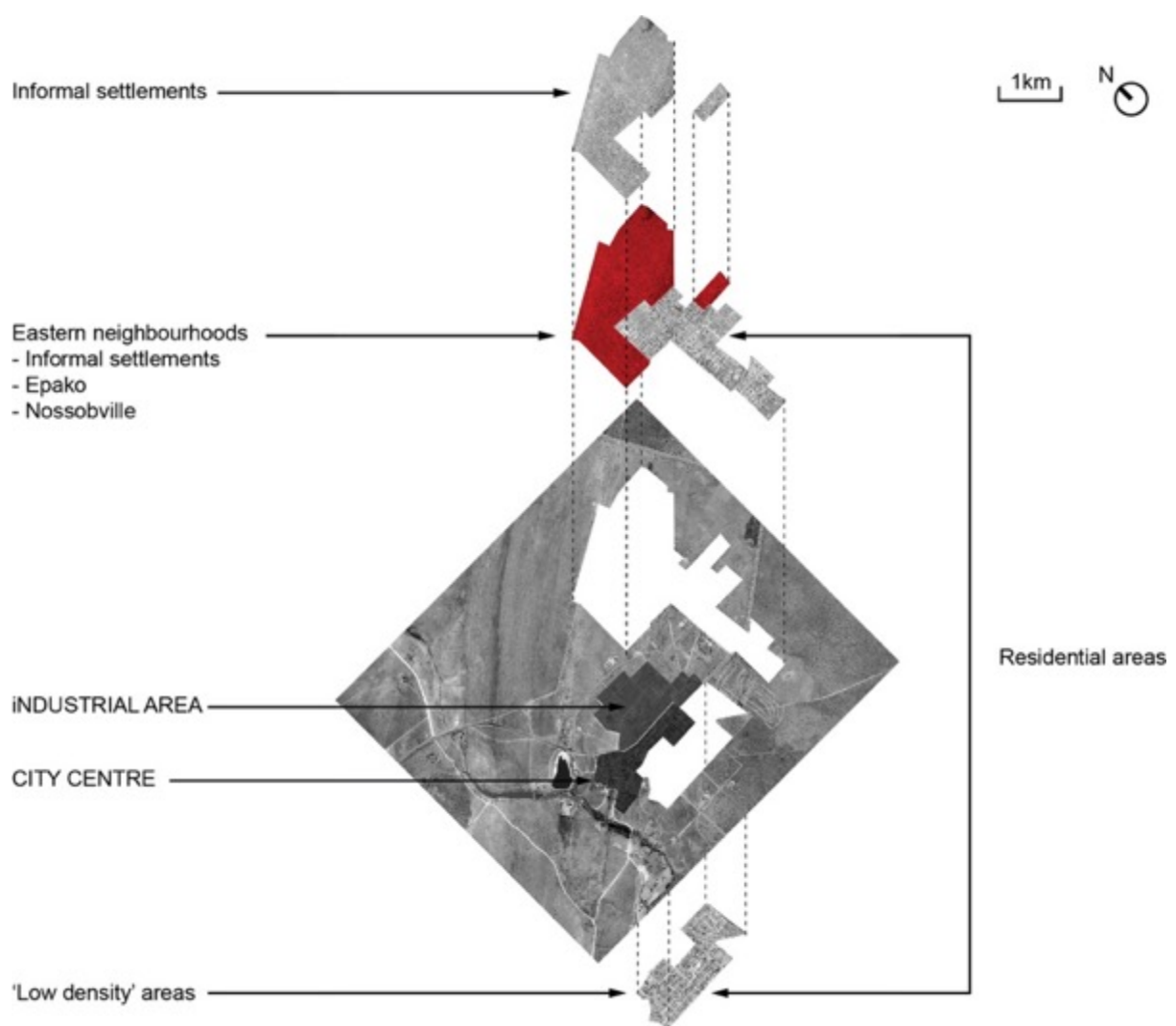


Figure 31 Diagram of Gobabis' urban fabrics.

The following section discusses a process that was undertaken through a partnership between the Shack Dwellers Federation (SDFN), the NGO (Namibia Housing Action Group

(NHAG), and the Municipality of Gobabis with the assistance of other stakeholders. Prior to the account included here, were successful cases of SDFN-supported housing developments; the Hatago savings group that settled in Rakutuka, south of Epako, is recognised by UN-Habitat as a best practice (UN-Habitat, 2006). However, the documentation of these is excluded in this account, as they do not seem to have impacted on more recent events. This partnership initially started with self-enumeration efforts in the early 2000s, but gained momentum once inhabitants of Freedom Square rejected the Municipal plans to relocate them to an even more peripheral area. The Municipality eventually agreed to upgrade the settlement instead of relocating it, and this paved the way to the process documented below. The partnership expanded, and a wide array of stakeholders took part in different ways. The process would eventually extend to the neighbouring informal settlements, and today it includes all the informal settlements in Gobabis. The NGO presents this approach as a 'city-wide' endeavour (ILMI, 2017). If one considers this as a single project, it may well be the single largest informal settlement upgrading effort in the country. However, at the moment of writing, only Freedom Square has seen significant physical improvements.

There are several processes that have and are currently taking place in informal settlements in Gobabis. The events described in this section are organised according to dates (see 9.2 below). In this section, only a partial account is given of each; however, there are other references that document some components at a greater or lesser extent than here. Currently, full studies on the use of data for participatory slum upgrading are underway (Mabakeng, 2018) and NHAG-SDFN have produced reports on what has been taking place in the process (SDFN & NHAG, 2014, n.d.). The site is also subject to international attention (Muller et al., 2016), as the place may be one of the first pilots of the Flexible Land Tenure (FLT) system, which potentially has international relevance. Lastly, and similarly to the case documented in Windhoek, it would be valuable to undertake a study of the impact that the issuing of titles will have on the 3,300 households in Freedom Square, and subsequently on other settlements. For this case I have made several interviews, among these with the National Coordinator and a technical employee at NHAG; the Omaheke SDFN Facilitator; two lecturers and one student at the Department of Architecture and Spatial Planning, NUST; a Community Development officer and a volunteer at the Gobabis Municipality; and a GIS Technologist at the HabitAfrica NGO.





Figure 32 Aerial photos of development of the area in question at different points in time (from top to bottom, 2003, 2010, 2013, and 2016). Source: Google Earth.

5.3.1. Planned displacement: on the early days of informal settlements in Gobabis

Settlement in the area known as Freedom Square started as early as 1994. In a similar fashion as in other larger towns, the local authority responded to this with the installation of basic services: six communal water taps and a mast light post. The initial interaction between the Municipality of Gobabis and inhabitants was respectful, but this would change later with rumours of relocations. What was not fully clear to inhabitants was that the area of Freedom Square was slated for development “for people that can afford it”, the municipal community worker recalls. When plans for relocation were made in 2004, the area now known as Kanaan was identified as ‘relocation area’, “conceived as an emergency measure to temporarily accommodate new residents” (SDFN & NHAG, n.d.:5). However, already at that time there were numerous informal structures erected in most areas bordering Epako, so this relocation would have entailed additional displacement for those already living in the place. While Freedom Square was already significantly populated by the early 2000s, the town planning scheme for Gobabis, dated 2005, allocates no area as ‘informal residential’.

The fact of Freedom Square being where it stands today was a response to a process of planned displacement. The area was slated for housing developments for those living in backyard structures within the formal area of Epako; those few who were already settled in the area would then be relocated to Kanaan. At this stage, SDFN members had already been allocated land by the Municipality in the area known as Rakutuka, so the local authority was therefore already familiar with SDFN processes. There were not many SDFN members active in Freedom Square, and activities started at the request of the local authority to the NGO. Another consideration in the context of Gobabis is that the local authority does not have guidelines for informal settlement upgrading. The municipal community worker is currently drafting such guidelines, which are about to be circulated for consultation purposes, and will then be submitted to council for approval. Until this point, the rules of engagement have been established on an *ad hoc* basis.

5.3.2. Encouraging participation: Self-enumeration as a first step in organising

The process I document here starts with Freedom Square. The earliest step in the process of the formalisation of Freedom Square can be situated in the self-enumeration exercises undertaken by SDFN-NHAG in the 2000s. The self-enumeration process started with recognition from Government that the Federation's approach to access to land and housing was worth supporting. In 2006, during the Africities Summit in Nairobi, Kenya, the then Minister of Regional and Local Government, Housing and Rural Development (MRLGHRD, now MURD), John Pandeni, had the opportunity to interact with SDFN members. During this exchange, there was a commitment made to undertake nation-wide data collection on informal settlements (Chitekwe-Biti, 2013: 109). The project was called Community Land Information Programme (CLIP) and it was supported by the Ministry (then MRLGHRD), as well as the Habitat Research and Development Centre (HRDC) and Shack Dwellers International (SDI). From March 2007 to October 2008, 235 informal settlements were profiled countrywide, and 134,884 households were enumerated. In total, it was estimated that 541,119 inhabitants were living in informal settlements (SDFN, 2009:8). According to the Community Land Information Programme (CLIP), Gobabis had 3,410 informal households, which amounted to an estimated 8,050 inhabitants (SDFN, 2009:123).

According to Mabakeng et al, CLIP was the first informal settlement profile undertaken by an SDI member at the national scale (2015).

In 2011, the first results indicated that about 3,059 inhabitants were living in Kanaan. There were 2,008 structures in the area, while the Municipality had only planned for 1,200. More importantly, there were only 12 dry toilets and 6 communal taps installed to service this population. This meant that there was one toilet per 255 inhabitants, and one communal tap for every 510 inhabitants. Furthermore it has been documented that 70% of the settlement was 'covered' by such services (SDFN & NHAG, n.d.:6), which means that there were more people depending on the services than those documented. Water taps would be operated by a household assigned as custodian for the sale of water for inhabitants. The household is paid a small allowance for this, which was N\$400 per month in 2015. A N\$2 water token allows the user to fill a 50 litre drum; some pay an additional amount for their drum to be delivered to their home (SDFN & NHAG, n.d.:38). Despite some improvements, this is a situation that still exists today.

A second phase of CLIP was developed when support of the Spanish NGO HabitAfrica (today Alianza por la Solidaridad, in Spanish, 'Alliance for Solidarity') became a possibility. Support for this was channelled through the Spanish Cooperation Agency, and helped to launch a second phase of CLIP in three pilot sites: Grootfontein, Mariental, and Gobabis. The selection of the process of the three pilots was determined through a number of variables by which various LAs in Namibia would be 'scored'. Some of these variables were the working relationship between SDFN-NHAG and the local authority, and the extent of informal settlements in the local authority. Eventually the three urban areas were selected, and a plan was structured as follows: the first year would be used for data collection, and after the second year, the team would develop improvement plans while continuing to gather data for the rest of the country. The aim was to make actual improvements to three pilot sites, while at the same time gathering data for the rest of the country. The Spanish NGO worker recalls that the objective was "doing the first census of informal settlements in Namibia". Contact with LAs was established, and in the case of Gobabis, the local authority was very helpful.

For each site, teams that included representatives of the local authority and inhabitants were established. From the NGO side, the team consisted of a member of NHAG, a member of HabitAfrica, and a member of SDFN. The team was based in Windhoek, but would visit the sites on a monthly basis. The teams would undertake a survey amongst inhabitants in the settlements, and collect geospatial data with global position system (GPS) equipment. The data was then discussed with inhabitants and LAs for analysis purposes. These two were thereafter incorporated digitally to produce interactive maps where one could consult the data of each household by clicking on their geographical location in the map. The NGO designed a data collection tool measuring several socioeconomic and socio-spatial aspects: household profile, age, occupation, development needs, health, distance to facilities, among many others. The rationale was to capture data that would be useful to produce plans and inform implementation. The local authority provided offices for the project, and the NGO contributed computers so that inhabitants could capture the information. According to the Spanish NGO worker, this was one of the first projects in SDI to use GIS and interactive mapping, and to have such detailed information per household. The GIS software that was used was gvSIG, an open-source software developed in Spain. This was strategic, as the objective was for this database to have the widest possible reach, where a commercial software would have been more limited.

There were also national exchanges organised by the NGO, in which some of the most dynamic members would travel to other towns to work with their local peers. Through this process, inhabitants from Mariental, Windhoek, or Usakos would come to Gobabis to assist with the process. They would also exchange experiences on how to negotiate with local authorities, how to analyse the information, and how to present it. Exchanges also allowed for members to learn about the local situation when visiting, which eventually became a useful resource for participants.

By 2012 all informal settlements in Gobabis were enumerated, numbered and identified. At this point already, Freedom Square was regarded as “one of the strongest settlements”, the NGO technical assistant remembers. During 2011 several public meetings and trainings took place, particularly in Kanaan. In these sessions, some of the data that was presented was on income, development needs, but also there was information on some of the most common

diseases in the settlement. The needs, the Spanish NGO worker remembers, “were always the same: ‘I need water, I need sanitation, I need land’”. Only occasionally would other needs come up, such as schools or clinics. The meetings would be attended by councillors, inhabitants and local authority officials. This round of data collection closed with a feedback session which included a handover of certificates of participation to enumerators who were part of the team.



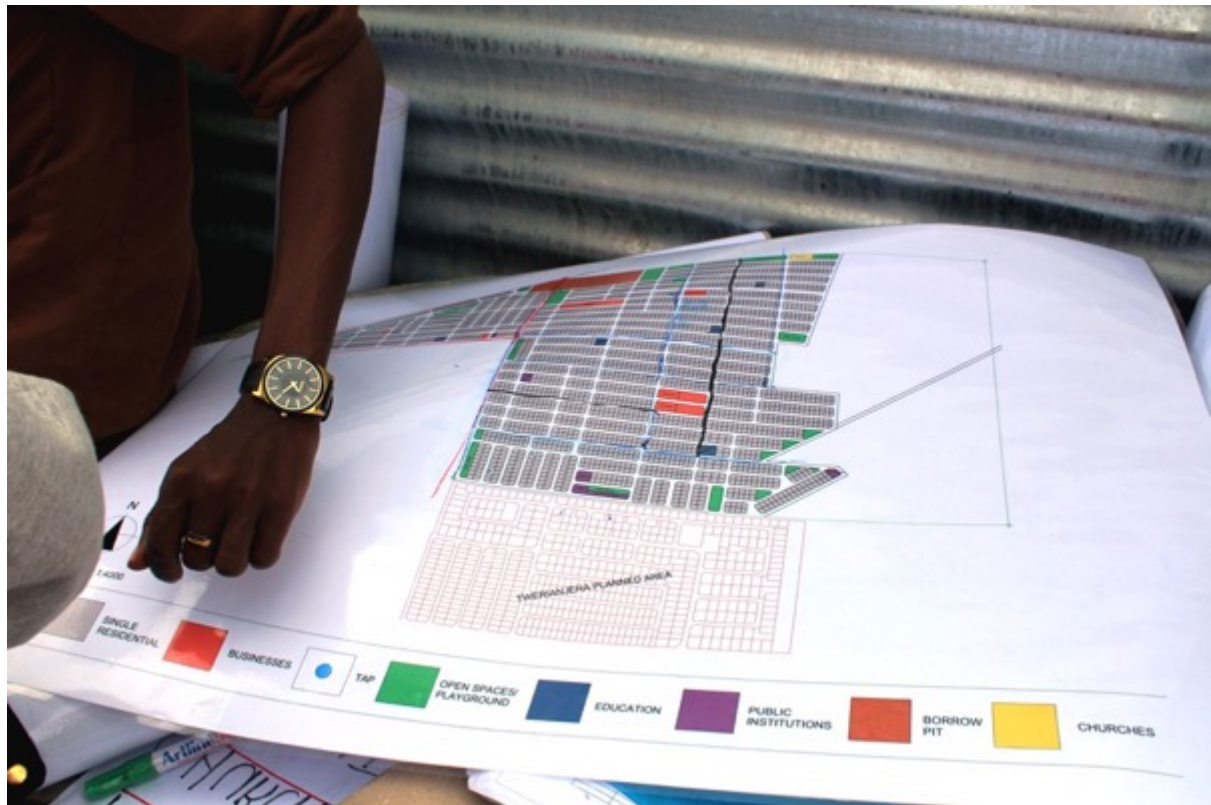


Figure 33 Photographs of ‘city-wide planning’ sessions with inhabitants, Municipal employees, NGO workers, and architecture students. Photographs courtesy of Martin Namupala.

5.3.3. Fixed plans, changing situation: planning, continuous growth, and recalibration

The Municipality aimed to organise Freedom Square spatially in a grid pattern. However, every month when the NGO team came from Windhoek, they would find a considerable number of newcomers who had settled in disregard of the planned grid. By 2015, the number of structures “had almost doubled since the initial enumeration in 2012” (Muller et al., 2016:10). This was not only happening in Gobabis; the Spanish NGO worker affirms they encountered this also in the other areas of the country. Plans would be made for a certain number of households in a defined area, but the number of structures would grow in a way the NGO and the local authority had not foreseen. This created additional work that the project teams did not envision and therefore had not planned or budgeted for. This would re-frame the extent and nature of the NGO interventions from this point on.

Sometime in 2013, the NGO team “had to put an end” to the data collection efforts and decided “to move on to the next phase”, the Spanish NGO technical worker explains. Originally, the team contemplated only a year of data collection in the pilot areas, and after three years, they found themselves still collecting data. However, the team still had some hope for implementation, even though they were aware that this could only happen after the project had ended. At this point, the NGO started to engage more decisively with local authorities on the plans for implementation. In Gobabis, a series of meetings with the Municipality was scheduled, “not to demand [...] but to pressure” it to act on the needs that were identified, the Spanish NGO technical worker recalls. This is when the project “slowed down”, according to his account. The Municipality would postpone meetings and would not engage much further with the proposed improvement plans. He attributes this not to lack of interest, but rather to the lack of available resources to undertake the upgrading plans. However, perhaps a more critical factor was the 2014 General Elections, in which the current President was elected into power. Reflecting on his experience during his time in Namibia, the Spanish NGO technical worker confirmed that many promises were made during elections, but the funds that were promised would eventually not materialise or at least not in full. He sees this as a key problem, as this left local authorities without sufficient funds to implement the actual improvements in the informal settlements. It was in part

because of this that the NGO decided to support a series of international exchanges with the hopes of drawing attention back to the project.

5.3.4. The international dimension: exchanges and the announcement of upgrading

In March 2013, the NGO team proposed to organise a trip to South Africa's Western Cape Province for the Municipality of Gobabis to witness examples of the 'bottom up' process the NGO was proposing as an alternative to relocation. The NGO organised a Namibian delegation consisting of a Councillor and the Community Development Officer of Gobabis Municipality (now Public Relations Officer) and an SDFN member as well as fellow members in other two LAs. Through the SDI network, two cases were identified for demonstration purposes: Langrug in Stellenbosch, and Mshini Wam settlement in Cape Town.

Langrug is an informal settlement that was located on municipal land in Stellenbosch. The settlement originated in the 1990s, and in 2011 it consisted of 1,858 structures, with a population of 4,088. At that time the settlement had only communal water and sanitation services, and no electricity (Stellenbosch Municipality & CORC, 2011:10). With the support of NGOs, which were also part of the SDI network, inhabitants organised and undertook self-enumeration exercises. This enabled communication with the Municipality, which in turn enabled the grassroots to start making gradual upgrades to the settlement. This included re-blocking, as well as installation of services and other infrastructure. The local NGO, itself an SDI member, attributes inspiration for this approach to similar processes taking place in Thailand³⁶, and also mentions that officials in the local authority in question had also travelled to see similar exercises in secondary cities in Uganda (Stellenbosch Municipality & CORC, 2011). Langrug inhabitants themselves were taken to visit a similar project in Philippi, Cape Town, to understand the nature of the process (ISN & CORC, n.d.). In short, the Namibian delegation arrived at a place that had itself been informed by international and local exchanges. During the visit to this site, the delegation was able to

³⁶ This may refer to the work done through Community Organizations Development Institute, a state organisation established in 2000 to assist with self-help and community finance in Thailand; or the Asian Coalition for Community Action, a three-year programme that aimed to support people-led socio-spatial development in 150 cities in 15 Asian countries in 2008.

speak with inhabitants, NGOs, as well as representatives of the Stellenbosch Municipality, who gave them “an overview of the relationship that has developed between the community and the municipality” (NHAG & SDFN, 2013).

While Langrug may be considered an example of an informal settlement on a green-field site, the example of Mshini Wam is an infill occupation in an open space within an area that was already ‘formally’ developed. The settlement started in the mid-2000s, arising from the impossibility of inhabitants continuing to paying rent elsewhere. In 2012, the settlement had 497 inhabitants, and there were only communal water and sanitation services (CORC, 2012:11). Also with support of NGOs, the settlement was able to do self-enumeration and liaise with the Municipality to upgrade the area. The re-blocking exercise allowed for municipal services to be installed, and to solve flooding situations in the settlement. The inhabitants of this settlement had also benefited from a visit to see activities in another upgrading area in Philippi. The settlement was also subject to design interventions, with the installation of the now-famous ‘Litre of light’ system and other fittings to make structures ‘green’ (SA SDI Alliance, 2012). The upgrading efforts in the area and the design features were exhibited at the 2013 Design Indaba Expo in Cape Town, which was a major showcase event for design-related matters in South Africa. In both Langrug and Mshini Wam projects, there was participation of students from an American university, as well as from the University of Cape Town, in the case of Langrug. In short, the Namibian team was able to see the possibility of partnerships with their own eyes, and hear from those involved regarding the lived experience of these processes.

The delegates from Gobabis “were impressed”, remembers the NGO technical assistant. According to the exchange report, the Namibian delegation learned about the virtues of self-enumeration exercises and upgrading through close participation with inhabitants (NHAG & SDFN, 2013). Municipalities also learned about the value of written agreements between local authorities and inhabitants. Arguably, this experience changed the way in which the former liaised with inhabitants in informal settlements. Soon after this, SDFN and NHAG signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the Gobabis Municipality. The community organiser refers to the MoU as a document that generated legitimacy of the activities among the communities: “this MoU was presented to the community in terms of

working together”. The signing ceremony took place “under the same tree where the first Gobabis saving group began 15 years ago” near Freedom Square, and was attended by 400 inhabitants (Mabakeng, 2013). During the ceremony, it was announced that Freedom Square would not be relocated but upgraded.



Figure 34 Photograph of the day of signing of MOU; left to right: Gobabis CEO, Federation coordinator, NGO coordinator. Photograph courtesy of NHAG.

5.3.5. The power of ‘the centre’: national development initiatives and their influence on the ground

While these developments were taking place, central government was preparing two large-scale interventions that would eventually have an impact nationwide. In 2011, the Namibian Government launched the Targeted Intervention Programme for Employment and Economic Growth (TIPEEG). This was conceptualised as a once-off state intervention to activate economic activity and employment creation in the ‘medium term’ (2011-14). The total investment was about N\$18,7bn, spread over six areas of intervention. One of these was ‘Housing and Sanitation’, towards which N\$1.8bn was allocated, and which aimed at

creating 44,337 direct and indirect jobs (NPC, 2011). From this amount, Gobabis received N\$25 million, of which N\$10 million were dedicated for sewerage facilities in informal settlements (New Era, 2013). Funding for this programme was sourced through the sale of sovereign debt in international markets, when Namibia issued a Eurobond in 2011. The place of the sale of this bond was London, and it raised US\$500 million from various international investors. While the theoretical objectives of the programme may be laudable, the risk related to such foreign debt was criticised (Duddy, 2011) as was the misuse of funds to enrich already privileged parties (The Namibian, 2013). Yet, it allowed for actual physical improvements in the infrastructure of urban areas.

5.3.6. The idea of ‘planning studios’

The origin of the planning studios concept can be traced back to the Association of African Planning Schools (AAPS) conference in Dar Es Salaam, Tanzania, in October 2010, titled ‘Revitalizing Planning Education in Africa’. AAPS is an initiative to engage planning education institutions on the continent, and was supported through a grant from the Rockefeller Foundation. The inspiration came from studios that Kenyan professionals presented during the conference, which were undertaken as a partnership between SDI and the University of Nairobi. The idea emerged to organise joint AAPS-SDI studios in Malawi, Uganda, Kenya, Namibia, Tanzania, Zambia and South Africa (AAPS & SDI, n.d.). The studios’ aims were to explore alternative planning methods based on partnerships with local inhabitants that were organised through the SDI network. The studios also encouraged the formation or consolidation of partnerships with other stakeholders, and outlined a number of principles, including: serving the needs of local communities, incremental development, self-enumeration and mapping, as well as engaging communities in “non-patronizing” ways (AAPS & SDI, n.d.:2). At the same time, there were physical improvements at some of the sites, and in other cases there were MoUs forged between partners. Sometime during the first planning studios, AAPS learned about the availability of funds through the Cities Alliance³⁷ in 2014, and informed the partners involved in the planning studios then. Four of

³⁷ Cities Alliance is a partnership between the World Bank and UN-Habitat to share information, administer grants and inform policy to address urban poverty.

those partners replied and would eventually benefit from additional funding to take the planning studios further: in Kitui, Kenya; in Lusaka, Zambia; in Kampala, Uganda; and in Gobabis, Namibia.

For the purpose of the Namibian studio, the Department of Architecture and Spatial Planning (DASP) of the Namibian University of Science and Technology (NUST) was allocated N\$80,000. These funds were given directly from Cities Alliance to Shack Dwellers International (SDI), of which SDFN is affiliate; these were administered through NHAG for accounting and auditing purposes. The funds were for 'community-based projects' as part of the Town and Regional Planning programme, which in the case of NUST was implemented as part of 'work-integrated learning' (WIL) course. WIL is embedded in the curriculum and aims at providing learning through simulated or actual professional work. In the case of the Town and Regional Planning programme, it was necessary to simulate WIL, because the profession is regulated by the Council of Town and Regional Planners, which itself imposed a number of skills required from graduates that the Faculty deemed that could not all be covered without simulation. Some of these skills include participation in community-based projects, but also layout of drafting studio, planning of workshops, and research. If such experience would not be covered, students would "not be registerable", notes one of the university planning lecturers. He continues to explain how this process would ordinarily happen: "[students] go to a community under our supervision and [...] act as if they are in private sector, we simulate work assignments". Throughout these planning studios, four cohorts of third-year students were involved. It is a remarkable fact that the students participating in these studios were also the first cohort of planners who graduated in Namibia, as DASP was only established in 2011, as the first university department offering architecture and planning degrees in the country.

5.3.7. Planning Studio 1: bringing together the various parties on the ground

The first studio took place in September 2013, with the objective to do the site analysis. Firstly, the students did a land-use survey, which is common practice in the discipline. They did a desktop study in terms of drainage, vegetation, and access to bulk infrastructure.

“Basically doing a site analysis to see what’s the potential and who stays where”, one university planning lecturer remembers. At that point, SDFN had already done an extensive CLIP exercise, so the university team had considerable socio-economic data to work with. However, for planners to assist with the re-blocking and demarcation of streets, they needed information about physical infrastructure. The students approached different Ministries to gather as much information as possible. One of the university planning lecturers regards the availability of recent high-quality aerial images as particularly helpful. These were those provided by an American land surveyor student who was doing research in Gobabis (Barnes, Volkmann & Muller, 2015). Once they had the desktop site analysis, the class visited the site to confirm the information in situ.

During the visit, students had to identify permanent structures already erected in the area. These were only a few, but they had eventually to be demolished. One of the accounts on the lack of permanent structures in the informal settlements is because the LA discourages it: “residents are not allowed to erect permanent structures in informal settlements because the local authority is not mandated to do reimbursements” in case of eviction and demolition, the NGO technical assistant explains. In the process of re-blocking, the issue of damage or loss of property became less of a concern; “[when a] community owned the process it does not involve any compensation” (Muller et al., 2016:12).



Figure 35 Photograph of demolished structure

Students were relatively easily accepted by the inhabitants. One of the university planning lecturers attributes this to the participation of senior SDFN members in the process and a good reputation enjoyed by saving groups in the area. However, he admits that social engagement was something that lecturers could not adequately prepare students for. There were introductory meetings so that inhabitants could understand why the students were there and to allow for some initial interaction before the actual fieldwork, but then it was “basically throwing them in the deep end”, one of the university planning lecturers remarks. He admits that engagement with inhabitants and the grassroots “is not a thing that you can teach, is learning by doing”. In other words, while the professional part was indeed taught in the classrooms, social engagement at the ground level was left to students’ own individual social skills. Towards the end of the site visit to Gobabis, students would present some of their findings to the grassroots and inhabitants as a whole. These findings identified the areas prone to flooding, the areas with clay soil, the areas that were better positioned to access bulk infrastructure. There was also a component of valuation, by which existing assets are taken into account, including existing vegetation, especially trees.

Planning studios were opened and closed with public events with key stakeholders and inhabitants. For the first studio closing ceremony, the Spanish NGO invited in the Ambassador of Spain and the director of the Spanish Cooperation Agency to draw attention to the project. The Spanish NGO technical worker remembers that this was of strategic importance to the project. This would effectively expose government officials and the leadership in the local authority to the project, and renew their commitment to it. A Director at the MURD read a speech on behalf of the Minister at that occasion, curiously speaking about Mass Housing eventually arriving at Gobabis (SDFN & NHAG, 2014). While the meaning of this meeting may have had different significance for the different parties, what was telling is that there was a common agreement that in-situ upgrading was the way to go.

5.3.8. Planning Studios 2: the state of matters when transitioning from Freedom Square to 'city-wide'

After the generally good experiences of the first round of studios, and with the additional funds secured through Cities Alliance, the process was able to continue. The scope of the project expanded from analysis to re-blocking and layout design, "so that community members could start negotiating with the council", remembers one of the university planning lecturers. The additional funds furthermore allowed the project to expand operations from only Freedom Square to Kanaan and Tuerijandjera.

During the second half of 2014, Freedom Square was organised in nine blocks. However, the Municipal community worker notes that there were tensions between saving groups and inhabitants who opted not to join. Those who did not join, did not necessarily do so because their aversion towards or inability to save, but because of a common perception that money is mishandled in saving groups. While constitutions that guide saving groups' activities have provisions to deter mismanagement of funds, they are not always effective. However, the tensions that the Municipal community worker noted were not always related to the saving process itself, but also to the divisions created by perceived differential beneficiation. She recalls a number of occasions during the process of re-blocking when the local authority had

to deal with the misunderstanding that plots would only be allocated to those who belonged to a saving group. She needed to clarify that everyone would be eligible to access land, not only those in savings groups.

According to the NGO technical assistant, despite the divisions, the process of re-blocking strengthened ties among the grassroots. Usually it was precisely the members who did not attend most of the meetings that hindered the process, arguably because “they didn’t understand what was going on”. The municipal community worker remarks that mobilisation and sensitisation should happen throughout the process, not only when required. She suggests that the direct engagement with inhabitants should be a permanent endeavour irrespective of whether a planning studio or a feedback presentation is taking place. Re-blocking started in earnest in 2015, and it was in 2016 when “there was a lot of movement around”. This, however, was only happening in Freedom Square; inhabitants from other settlements “took a back seat and said, ‘we’re going to wait and see what happens in Freedom Square’”, the NGO technical worker remarks. Despite this seemingly passive position of inhabitants in other areas, the community organiser recognises that Freedom Square remains “the example” for the other settlements.





Figure 36 Aerial photographs showing the process of re-blocking in Freedom Square at different points in time (from top to bottom, 2002, 2010, 2013, and 2016). Source: Google Earth.

During these discussions, various issues brought about different reactions. There were some that appeared to have not caused any friction, such as ideas around urban agriculture. However, there were other more contentious issues, such as the location of *shebeens*. The tensions between the social impact of alcohol within communities and the economic benefits for the household in question were discussed. It was agreed that the reality of *shebeens* could not be wished away, and the re-blocking exercise also consisted in finding a “suitable location” for *shebeens* (SDFN & NHAG, 2014:22). The community organiser also recognises that, while informal businesses and trading were considered in the planning, they are in principle subject to the standard municipal procedure of establishing a business, including the need to submit an application to operate a business to the Council for approval. It seemed that, at this point, the participatory planning efforts did not have the faculties ability to affect land use. However, and at the very minimum, the discussion nevertheless raised awareness of this point.

5.3.9. ‘Something has taken place here’: Dialectic tensions between the process and the outcomes

When the outcome had been delivered, it is worth bringing together the varying accounts on the outcome vis-à-vis the process. Studios culminated with formal layouts, which were then submitted to the Municipality for processing and approval. However, one of the university planning lecturers acknowledges that re-blocking took priority in the process: “it was more important to see that this re-blocking is done, and not having these initial broader discussions: how can one ensure connectivity, issues of inclusion”. Another lecturer notes that the studios were presented as ‘city-wide’ endeavours, while in reality the projects only focused on the informal settlements. Instead of using the opportunity to question the nature of the formal areas as well, the objectives were limited to incorporation rather than transformation: “now you sit with proposed layouts that’s [sic] just a continuation of the Kanaan A, just take the roads straight through to the next [area], draw it up, and say ‘ok, now it’s formalised’”, remembers one of the university planning lecturers. He regards such considerations as “how these settlements are organised, are operating” and “finding some sort of opportunities in the structure” as issues that were “not sufficiently addressed”. An

emphasis in the process appeared to have left the design aspects of how to configure the layout at a secondary level.

Another observation made by one of the university planning lecturers was regarding the degree of involvement of inhabitants in the design of the layouts. Participants would be able to have a say on the location of certain services, but some of the basic design decisions were substantially predetermined. While the community organiser affirms that inhabitants themselves were “the ones doing the planning”, the professionals who were involved had a more nuanced view. The architecture student observes that the templates that were used for the participatory design were “limited”; he elaborates: “it guided people on how to plan, if you have a box, of course you only plan with boxes”. Another university planning lecturer acknowledges that this was a very specific approach to formalisation, and that planning studios do not necessarily need to focus on re-blocking only. He explains that formalisation can be understood “in the sense of making it a more liveable community”, such as developing areas for informal trade, crèches, or establishing or supporting a grassroots group or homeowner’s association. Among professionals there were varying views on the allocation of time for site analysis, ‘community engagement’, and planning and design. While the architecture student felt there was a need for further analysis, one of the university planning lecturers expressed the view that he was in any case “not sure [...] if that had a major impact on the eventual layout”.



Figure 37 Photographs of the presentation of planning process in Freedom Square (top), and a photograph of the tree where meetings usually take place (bottom).

Materially, the achievements in the informal settlements of Gobabis may still be limited; however, the non-material aspects were recognised by almost every stakeholder. “I would say that they’ve moved a step ahead”, the Municipal community worker affirms, referring to the inhabitants of Freedom Square. She mentions how initially the local authority convened all informal settlements for public meetings at the same time, “because their needs are the same; they want water, electricity, sewerage, and brick houses”. However, because Freedom Square has now ‘moved a step ahead’, the Municipality convenes public meetings separately for the inhabitants there; “development has taken place, you now start talking other languages”. She does not say anything conclusive about what has taken place in the other settlements. However, in the case of Freedom Square, she is unequivocal: “when you have a community that feels responsible [...] you can say that something has taken place here.”

5.3.10. The emerging role of the university as mediator and producer

Planning studios had immediate benefits on the ground, but also paved the way for more long-term benefits. One of the university planning lecturers mentions that some of the students who took part in the studios are now working in different institutions. One is a town planner in Luderitz, another in Tsumeb, and yet another at MURD. He finds it valuable that they are now working in the implementing institutions and already have an understanding of the way the upgrading process works. It is worth mentioning again that the participation of the university in these studios was made possible through the availability of foreign funds. Without these, “simply to get the students in a bus is very difficult”, one of the university planning lecturers recognises. He refers to the costs involved for transport, accommodation, and allowances for food. For university excursions to be officially part of the coursework, certain administrative procedures have to be followed. The costs for transport are calculated per kilometre depending on the vehicle, and accommodation and allowances for food are calculated per day and per student while lecturers’ allowances are considerably higher. This is why one of the university planning lecturers acknowledges that without these funds, future studios will most likely focus only on Windhoek, where the university is based and such expenses can be largely avoided.

One of the university planning lecturers acknowledges that one of the greatest challenges was to coordinate the timeframes of the local authority, the NGO, and the university. This is something that was also acknowledged by the municipal community worker. Furthermore, the local authority timeframes include both the work hours of the officials as well as the scheduling of Council meetings. For the university, the quality of work can be affected by fragmentation in the process: “you don’t have that continuity, a new bunch of students comes in, they work with layouts that the community proposed [...] and probably the ones that are going to finalise it will be a new group of students”. An additional challenge is the sheer scale that ‘city-wide’ approaches can entail in terms of the number of inhabitants (which one can count in thousands) vis-à-vis the small number of students (which one can count in tens). In the case of the planning studios described, about a dozen students had to deal with thousands of inhabitants. This not only represents a challenge in the quantitative sense, but also in the qualitative sense. How does one engage thousands of households in a meaningful or at least useful way for all parties?

The relevance of the role of the university as a mediator between inhabitants and the local authority in the process was important. “We saw that very clearly in Gobabis”, one of the university planning lecturers recognises. This was particularly relevant in views of the previous tensions that existed between the inhabitants and the local authority, specifically when the relocation plans in Freedom Square were still in place. He explains the usefulness of the university in this process:

“it’s not a Municipality that enforces it, it’s also not a community that demands it; both gave input and it was the university who came with a proposal that was more acceptable for both parties.”

On the other hand, the other university planning lecturer acknowledges that sometimes the role of the university may need to go beyond its usual mandate: “Is it purely educational?” He refers to the needs that may arise during the process that fall outside of what is required academically for the course. This, in his view, also takes a toll on the ones involved: “as a lecturer [you get the feeling that] you are involved more than it’s necessary”. The

importance of the role is, therefore, not what is at stake, but *how* to make it possible for universities to fulfil this role.

5.3.11. The changing nature of the social process: representation, meetings, and ownership of the process

When the upgrading efforts in Gobabis started, there were only a few members of SDFN in the area; today the federation regional coordinator reports that there are 32 active groups in Gobabis, and 42 in the Omaheke region. New leadership emerged in the process. The NGO technical assistant remembers that “the process managed to bring out that leadership that wasn’t in the community before”. This was particularly the case with the youth: “the young people were actually the ones that drove the data collection process”, she remembers. At the same time, the upgrading activities allowed for leaders to emerge during the engagements with local authority and the university. The NGO technical assistant recognises that the leadership that emerged did so not through elections, but through their own initiative. She prefers to refer to them as ‘representatives’. She elaborates: “I can’t say ‘leaders’, because communities initially did not elect anyone, but then there were some that volunteered”. One of the university planning lecturers also observes a shortcoming with regards to the voluntary nature of the process: “one of the issues [...] is the principle of ‘this is voluntary’”. He mentions that “people feel their effort has a monetary value”, which has been an issue that he has seen not only in this process, but also in his previous experience as a planner at the NGO supporting SDFN. The issue of leadership emerging may be linked to hopes for other opportunities, because the work undertaken by inhabitants entailed no actual monetary gains for the Federation or the leadership that emerged.

However, collective results are not easy to attain with other pressing matters in individuals’ everyday life. The Federation’s regional coordinator acknowledges that some of the challenges SDFN faces are members not attending meetings, others not saving regularly, and others not cooperating when the need to act together arises. There is a significant number of meetings entailed in the process: there are the weekly meetings for individual saving groups, then there are regional and national meetings, as well as the feedback sessions where progress is presented to the NGO. Finally, there are also meetings called by

the local authority, but these occur on a less frequent basis. Asked whether the groups undertake other more leisure activities together, she clarifies that the groups exist for the purpose of saving to access land and housing. Otherwise, she clarifies, members have their own private commitments. The frustration with regards to frequent meetings is understandable, but it also has to do with delays in the actual improvement of living conditions. This frustration places additional pressure in the grassroots, as it erodes credibility in the process. The community organiser remembers calling for meetings and getting a reply with disbelief: “you and your meetings, [...] you are lying to us, that you’ll bring this to us, but there’s nothing happening”. Now that he is volunteering at the Municipality to follow up on these upgrading processes, he understands some of the reasons of the delays: “things are not just like you can say ‘bring water tomorrow’ and the water is there, there’s some procedures and criteria that you have to go through”. He nevertheless feels strengthened by the partnership approach, as he is able to rely not only on the Municipality but on the NGO and the university when he is in need of information. However, the workload is considerable, as it is only he and another female colleague who coordinate the social aspect of the partnership; they furthermore do so on a part-time volunteer basis. Regarding how they have managed to organise thousands of inhabitants, he puts himself as an example saying that “one day I want to see myself being lifted up from here where I am at this stage”. He was referring to the power that prospects of better living conditions has in mobilising inhabitants for collective action.





Figure 38 Office of community organisers at Gobabis Municipality's Epako office.

A question that many of those I have spoken with raise directly or indirectly is 'who leads?' While one of the university planning lecturers argues that the overall process of upgrading in Freedom Square and the other settlements was "definitely" led by the NGO, others have different views. The NGO technical assistants attribute the success of the project to the leadership displayed by inhabitants during the process:

"if you have the community owning the process, they understand each and every step, they understand why we need to use aerial images, they understand why data needs to be captured before we come to any arrangement, it becomes an essential part of [...] making sure we achieve our goals"

She concludes that "if you [would] have [had] NHAG or the Municipality leading the process, I don't think it would've worked out the way it did". However, during her account, she referred more to the 'ownership' of the process, and less to who had taken leadership in it.

“the community owned the process, they would be the ones actually requesting [...] NHAG to come assist them, they were the ones driving [the process] and we were just coming for their requests”

Ownership of the process can be shared, and if this is the case, the question of ‘who owns more and who owns less’ becomes a rather subsidiary question.

5.3.12. The double edge of ‘the package’ of formalisation: titling, services, and association.

It was during the time of the planning studios that the opportunity to include Gobabis as a pilot site for FLT started to emerge. The inclusion of Gobabis was facilitated through the presence of the NGO coordinator in the FLT Regulations Committee at the MLR, a German cooperation agency worker reckons. She further explains that Freedom Square “was seen as a good case study to see how [...] participatory planning [...] can be incorporated into the FLT”. The concrete steps to take in Freedom Square with regards to FLT are still under discussion, as there are some steps that need to be undertaken for the pilot to comply with the principles of the FLT Act. The Act regulating the FLT stipulates that associations are required to be formed in order for the titling scheme to be issued (for the fragment in question, see 9.6 below). In view of this, the entire Freedom Square informal settlement would need to either become one single association with ‘sub-associations’, or allowance needs to be made for an informal subdivision within the block that would instead give space for independent associations. According to one of the German cooperation agency workers, “there are different ideas” about how to do this. What is certain is that the key challenge is how the FLT will be applied in upgrading processes that have already seen considerable progress. Considering the significant population currently living in informal settlements countrywide, the way this case is approached may determine the usefulness of FLT in other informal settlements where land is already occupied. At this point in Namibia, however, this may be largely the case.

The local authority is about to issue certificates that recognise the occupation by registering the heads of households to the demarcated plots (see 5.3.12 above). This certificate only has currency within the local authority; “it won’t help them anywhere else”, the Municipal community worker recognises. The certificate, which is still under discussion, contains the name and ID number of the inhabitant, identification of the plot in question (e.g. erf and block number, location, area), rights (e.g. residential). The certificate also contains a sketch of the plot in question, including coordinates as well as conditions of the certificate and it also makes reference to the FLT Act (see 9.6 below). This certificate is currently awaiting Council approval and, at the moment, the *de jure* land ownership remains with the Municipality. Legally speaking, blocks will only be able to be registered once the planning process is undertaken. In the certificate, the following conditions are established:

- a) The occupant is a first time land owner (may not own land elsewhere).*
- b) Beneficences should be 21 years of age and above except [sic] orphans.*
- c) The land may not be used for activities that cause excessive noise and are a nuisance to others.*
- d) Married couples can only get one plot.*
- e) The Land Occupant will be a member of volu[n]tary association which constitutions will provide the conditions of transfe[r]ring the land rights and give the Association the opporutnity [sic] to register Landhold Titles.*
- f) The rightful owner shall sign this certificate.*
- g) The Land Occupant will be required to pay for the development of the land and services installed.*
- h) Permanent structures can be erected on the plot with the planning approval of the Gobabis Municipality.*
- i) The land occupant is responsible to ensure that the conditions are followed and will not be able to lay claims to Landhold Titles or compensation, when permanent structures are erected and the conditions to qualify [sic] for Landhold Title were not met.*

The benefits of issuing such informal titles for the inhabitants of Freedom Square and the other settlements will only be seen over the years; however, the benefits for the local authority may materialise sooner. One of the concrete objectives with the issuing of certificates is the introduction of a ‘land occupation fee’: “we want them to start contributing to council coffer for us to be able to assist them when it comes to services”, acknowledges the Municipal community worker. The fee is set to cost beneficiaries N\$50 per month, and knowing that the local authority will be unlikely to receive payments

without certificates of ownership of some kind, they generally support this form of ‘informal’ titling.

**GOBABIS MUNICIPALITY
CERTIFICATE OF RECOGNITION**

Certificate no: [REDACTED]

I hereby certify that it recognised its land occupation

Land Occupant: [REDACTED]
National ID: [REDACTED]
Residential address: Freedom Square

Description of portion of land in respect of which right of recognition has been granted:
Erf No: [REDACTED] Location: Freedom Square
Area (m²): 309 Block Number: [REDACTED]

Description of land which municipality granted recognition rights:
Approved land use: Residential
Issued date: 30/05/2017

Gobabis Municipality, CEO
Honorable Worship Mayor

The figure shows represents land parcel:

Corner points and map display: [REDACTED]
Projection: Geographic
Datum: [REDACTED]
UTM: [REDACTED]

No.	Longitude	Latitude
4188	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
4189	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
4190	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
4191	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
4192	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]

Condition of this certificate:
The certificate gives the land occupant occupation rights that can be transferred to a Landhold Title according to the conditions of the Flexible Land Tenure Act of 2012 and the regulations to be proclaimed, under the following conditions:

- The occupant is a first time land owner (may not own land elsewhere).
- Beneficiaries should be 21 years of age and above except orphans.
- The land may not be used for activities that cause excessive noise and are a nuisance to others.
- Married couples can only get one plot.
- The Land Occupant will be a member of voluntary association which constitutes will provide the conditions of transferring the land rights and give the Association the opportunity to register Landhold Titles.
- The rightful owner shall sign this certificate.
- The Land Occupant will be required to pay for the development of the land and services installed.
- Permanent structures can be erected on the plot with the planning approval of the Gobabis Municipality.
- The land occupant is responsible to ensure that the conditions are followed and will not be able to lay claims to Landhold Titles or compensation, when permanent structures are erected and the conditions to qualify for Landhold Title were not met.

Figure 39 Image of the local form of titling. Image courtesy of NHAG.

The municipal community worker acknowledges that “the package of formalisation”, is something that comes with attached costs. She mentions a proposal to encourage inhabitants to apply for a loan from Twahangana Fund to pay for individual water connection. She is aware that only once the connection is established will it enable recurring payments for services to be made. She is aware of the contradictions of ‘formalisation’, in the sense that while installing services is clearly a pressing need from the human rights’ perspective, concerns remain over whether these will be affordable or not to the beneficiaries. She notices that in informal settlements there is “a culture of doing it by oneself”. She defines the role of the Municipality as to “bring them back” by “preparing people psychologically to the process of formalisation”. She perceives a sense of inhabitants questioning ‘what is there for me?’ This, she observes “requires mental change” and “creating an awareness that they need these benefits”. The Municipal community worker

has an understanding of how the wealthier and poorer inhabitants of Gobabis are interconnected:

“they [wealthier inhabitants] are indirectly subsidising informal settlements because informal settlement residents don’t pay anything, they’re not in a position to contribute to the council’s coffers. As we know, LAs are relying on the revenue they’re getting. They have the challenge to provide these services, water, electricity, sewer”

At the moment, it is unclear how these certificates will work within the process of the FLT, but the NGO technical assistant believes that the inhabitants will only accept lawful landhold titles. The NGO coordinator maintains that the Global Land Tool Network has been following the case of Gobabis, and that they are keen to see the effects of titling in this case. On the other hand, the NGO technical assistant argues that issuing *starter* titles for the FLT will create disappointment at the ground level, as for many inhabitants this process has been going on for about twenty years, so the word ‘starter’ appears in this context starkly inadequate. The Municipal community worker suggests that if groups are formed explicitly for the FLT, the process should be as simple as possible in order “not to divide them”. Differential beneficiation, even if only a perception, will be divisive. A concrete measure to avoid this would be to standardise the constitutions of every group, “so that it doesn’t tomorrow bring an aspect of a group being better than another association, or a group seeming to benefit more than another [...] because right there you can have a lot of division”. The discussion on this matter, however, continues.

The NGO coordinator is rather sceptical on how a process that is mainly led at Ministerial level can have a sensible impact at the grassroots. She sees that the MLR “only deals with the local authority” without recognising “that the process is a social process”. She stresses that “municipalities are not the only ones that manage people’s processes [...], currently it is the network of the Federation with support of NHAG and our stakeholders”. Among the pilots that were chosen for the FLT, Freedom Square is “the only one that has a social process [...], the other ones were chosen based on LAs requesting it, not based on what communities are busy doing”. She also acknowledges that the pilot cases are very dissimilar, and that the issues of informal settlement upgrading vary fundamentally from those in

which groups organise to access land in green field sites. Currently, she reflects, the processes that have taken place in Gobabis deal with “the problem of scale” and highlights the fact that “it’s not 30 or 40 households, it’s thousands of households”. She has been working in the field long enough to remember that in 1995, when the idea of FLT first emerged, it made sense to work with smaller groups, since informal settlements were not that extensive, and the group scale was therefore conducive to manage internal matters better: their finances, municipal accounts, managing repayments, etc. Today, however, Namibia is in a situation where most of its urban population lives in informal settlements (see 4.1.4 above) and LAs have different experiences of working with groups. After having worked for more than three decades on housing issues with organised groups, she reflects that “the savings group model is a very good model for communities to organise themselves and implement improvements, but it might not be the best model to secure the tenure”. While the tenure focus remains, the actual benefits and physical changes on the ground appear to be following a different, if at times parallel, track.

5.3.13. ‘It’s the little things’: Everyday life and the local politics of informal spatial arrangements

With only informal demarcation having taken place to date, boundary disputes are a common matter of disagreement. As mentioned earlier, only the outer boundary was demarcated professionally; inner boundaries were laid out with the assistance of NUST students and lecturers, and it was up to inhabitants themselves to reinforce these signs with the fences they could afford to build. However, “some are removing the pegs”, the Municipal community worker acknowledges. Some inhabitants extend their boundaries unilaterally: “today my erf ends here, tomorrow it ends there”, she mentions to illustrate the situation. These issues may escalate, sometimes leading to quarrels of different kinds. In one boundary dispute, one inhabitant complained about a neighbour invading her area and attributed this to the specific nature of the neighbour’s cultural group. However, the Municipal community worker intervened, inviting the quarrelling parties to move away from tribalism, and acknowledge that the disagreement can be solved in a relatively

straightforward way. Through the process of undertaking the measurements, the tension was eased. She was clear on her objective: “we should encourage unity”.

Other sources of conflict are related to the social contract and consideration between inhabitants. She shares as an example how some quarrels about water are merely based on a perception of unequal allocation of resources. An inhabitant who was extending his house required more water for the construction process, and therefore bought several water drums. A neighbouring household complained that he “was taking a lot of water”, and because there was only one water tap, filling his drums would take a lot of time, forcing others to wait. Here, the role of the local authority was merely that of mediation, and convincing the household requiring high quantities of water to fill up the drums in times of less demand. “It’s little things [...], but eventually it will fall into place”, she mentions. However, this mediation at the local level seems to be crucial to maintain harmonious everyday life on the ground.

5.3.14. ‘It actually works’: Social mix, local economies and the production of difference

One of the aspects highlighted by various stakeholders is the high degree of social mixing in the informal settlements of Gobabis. The municipal community worker explains:

“one comes from Rundu, the other from Ovamboland, the other is Herero, and the other from Karas, but once they come, they start sharing the same problems, same living conditions; they became a family [...] regardless of the ethnic groups”.

There is power in social mixing; she recognises: “this is their resource”. Referring specifically to the area of Kanaan, the architecture student reflects: “it was incredible to see a Himba woman having a plot next to a San woman, and to see how does it actually work”. Although more areas have been subdivided into individual plots, it is not uncommon to see traditional buildings within a plot (see Figure 40). The architecture student highlights that this difference is also the source of a kind of self-recognition: “you find a pride that people

actually have for their homes and the streets”. The student also notices some unique local economies taking place in the area: some go on bicycle to nearby farms to bring wood to sell back in the settlement. His view reflects that of the community organiser that by now there are plenty of businesses in the informal settlements. The various skills each party brings to the table has been mentioned as a contributory factor in creating new ways of creating and sustaining livelihoods.



Figure 40 Photographs of Kanaan

5.3.15. The ‘learning centre’: end of international support and prospects of a way forward.

Toward the end of 2014, the international support for the activities in Gobabis came to an end. On the one hand, the support through the Spanish Cooperation Agency was ending as originally scheduled. However, it was not only the project support that was ending, but also

the activities of the entire Spanish Cooperation Agency in Namibia. The Spanish NGO technical worker remembers that this had to do with the economic crisis that affected Spain. On the other hand, the funds for the planning studios from AAPS and Cities Alliance were also coming to an end. As mentioned earlier, NUST is not in a position to provide funds for students to regularly travel to Gobabis as part of the workshop, which meant that the university support also decreased. The notion of partnerships will be tested now that a considerable portion of international funding has ended, and local institutions will have to invest in continuing the process themselves.

Some elements of the project did not achieve the level of sustainability envisioned at the onset. One important component of CLIP that was originally conceived was that the data gathered would be made available to and adopted by MURD for future use. The Spanish NGO technical worker admits that such a database would only be useful if it could be updated at least every two years, as informal settlements are constantly changing. “If you don’t update this information in two years, it has expired; it is of no use”, he admits. He tried to organise workshops to teach employees of MURD on how to work with the database. Although such workshops “went well”, he suspects that the database is not actively in use, let alone being expanded or updated. He regards this as a loss, as the aim was to get the MURD to “own” the project to ensure sustainability. Although MLR was contacted to partner in upgrading efforts, its participation seems to have been negligible up to this point. MURD’s presence during the upgrading process was minimal, and would only come in the latter stages. The question of whether the time spent on data gathering versus that spent on engaging with authorities was apportioned adequately remains a point for the different stakeholders to reflect upon.

The project nevertheless established a way of doing things, even if it is unclear whether the partnerships are winding down or just changing in nature. One of the university planning lecturers fears that a perception could remain that the NGO is the one responsible for upgrading efforts in informal settlements. He recalls an occasion in which a planner from another local authority was explaining at a public event how an area within their jurisdiction was “being developed by Shack Dwellers [SDFN]”. This, according to him, perpetuates a notion that informal settlement upgrading is being taken care of by an external agent,

rather than being understood as a partnership. On the issue of capacity within LAs, he mentions that in the case of the Gobabis Municipality, the capacity was not so much the issue, as the actual will to take ownership of the situation in informal settlements. He mentions that in the early days, before the process started, “even though there was the capacity, I’m not sure if it was conducive to the process”. He was suggesting that the allocation of time that formal institutions give to ‘the informal’ was insufficient, and did not always engage productively with the situation. At the same time, the NGO co-director admits, there are some ideas that are hard to convey to the Council and the officials, who need “to understand processes, to understand the dynamics”. Both in the case of Gobabis and Namibia at large, the NGO co-director observes that “you invest in this council staff to understand this process, when this person is about to understand, this person would then resign and take up another position and then you need to start all over”. However, this seems to happen “at all levels, from the Municipality to Government”. For partnerships to consolidate and be sustainable, there will need to be a recognition of the continuous learning character of the process.

The NGO coordinator sees this experience as demonstrating how a general participatory framework allows for other initiatives to take place within it, including in principle also the FLT. The model that is needed, she reflects, is one that allows for various modalities to operate: saving groups, individuals that can get bank loans, independent groups, households with their own access to resources, BTP loans, and even NHE, which generally services middle-income groups. She envisions a model that can be open to everybody, even one in which a fraction of beneficiaries ends up being middle-income; “you’re not going to separate people in the informal settlements just based on income”, she notes. The ‘city-wide’ process in Gobabis has, therefore, become a landmark in the SDFN and NHAG efforts over their 22 years of existence. They have shifted from supporting saving groups on an individual basis to engaging with informal settlements as a whole through ‘city-wide planning’. Perhaps inadvertently, by doing this, the contested division between federated and the so-called ‘independent groups’ in principle disappears. This clearly has significant implications for the Federation and the NGO. The processes in Gobabis, particularly with CLIP, “influenced” the drafting of the FLT regulations (Muller et al., 2016:7). Therefore, the experiences on the ground have been of educational value to the various stakeholders. In

one of the documents from SDI, Gobabis is clearly described as “a learning centre” (Know Your City, 2017:5).

5.3.16. Recent updates and outlook

The most recent upgrading effort was made possible when MURD made N\$8 million available for the purchasing of materials for inhabitants to install their own water infrastructure. The community organiser recalls the proposal from inhabitants to the local authority: “since we are not having services, can we, the community, try to install services on our own?” The idea was presented to the local authority and the NGO, and from then on, inhabitants themselves organised the process with the assistance of the NGO. The installation will be concluded in four phases, mentions the NGO co-director: firstly, they will install individual water supply “through training”; then they will connect water meters to individuals; then there will be provision of sewer, excavation and installation of sewer pipes; and finally, the construction of houses. A plumber was hired by the NGO to train the inhabitants on how to install the sewer pipes. He also remembers how a purpose-made contract had to be made to ensure his performance: “there was a MoU that was signed between the plumber and the community”. Regarding the content of the MoU, he explained that it needs to specify even the time at which workers should be on site, otherwise “people will not show up”, he mentions. He stresses the importance of inhabitants being able to say: “but you signed here!” Regarding the process, he mentions: “They dig [trenches] together with the group, they don’t need to dig individually”, referring to how the process is easier when done collectively. A technical challenge is that the area is rocky, which makes the process of digging trenches particularly difficult. The NGO organised for a jackhammer to be availed to the inhabitants. Once the NGO and local authority confirmed the funds from MURD, about N\$1.9m had to be budgeted for a contractor to excavate the sturdy soil. Currently, there is also a call for funding through the SDI website to assist the self-help efforts to construct sanitation infrastructure for Freedom Square (SDI, 2017a); the same funding mechanism is available for the self-enumeration efforts in Tuerijandjera (SDI, 2017b). These processes are on-going as I write (ILMI, 2017).

In recent months, there was another round of studios that were organised with the assistance of a private architectural firm. The focus was on Kanaan A, B, C, and Tuerijandjera, and the concept of the planning studios was to be implemented again. On this occasion, only three town planning students were able to participate as part of their coursework, but a few architecture and quantity surveying students joined on a voluntary basis. Architecture students put forward additional spatial considerations with regards to the planning layout and the visual material that was being used for the participatory planning exercises. However, the 'city-wide' nature of the process was put into question; the architecture student remembers challenging the peripheral location of the informal settlements, arguing that there was sufficient land in more central areas. However, his observations were met with a lack of enthusiasm. One inhabitant commented on this: "we can walk, it [city centre] is just 20 min [away from the informal settlements]". The process appears to have furthermore taken place in a less coordinated manner than the previous round, particularly with respect to the participation of the local authority. While I had the opportunity to take part in one exchange event between the countries that benefitted from the Cities Alliance funds in 2014 (ILMI, 2017), these new developments were taken place only at the time of writing the thesis.

6. Discussion

In this section I bring together the cases with the themes outlined in the literature review (see chapter 2 above). I organise these into three areas of discussion: those relating to co-production and *autogestion*; those relating to the state, civil society and other participants in the processes; and lastly those related to matters of land and the production of housing. I conclude with a short paragraph summarising the claims made within this section, as well as some reflections on the limits and significance of my study.

6.1. 'Co-productive', '*autogestive*' practices

In this section I discuss how the practices I document can be understood through the concepts of co-production and *autogestion*. In the first section, I discuss how the literature on co-production and *autogestion* outlined above (see specifically 2.2.1 above) can be mobilised to organise and understand the events and the strategies employed. In the second section, I discuss how the rhythms in which the process unfolded can be evidence for thinking about the processes in the abstract. Thereafter I discuss some of the ways of relating the three practices, through reflecting on the issue of leadership and representativity. I then question whether viewing the partnerships in these processes as 'institutionalised' is a useful criterion when the engagements, even when there is a contractual relationship, appear to be rather contingent and subject to the situation. I continue by exploring some of the asymmetries that can be found in these practices, and conclude with discussing the issue of autonomy in the practices, both between local and central government, as well as between individuals and the grassroots.

6.1.1. Strategies employed in the process

Here, I outline different kinds of co-production based on the different situations found in each of the practices; some of them found in the literature, and some categories that I

propose. I organise these in a table below (see Table 5), while noting that the boundaries between each row are not hard-edged; and that one of the experiences described could benefit more than one category. While some cases are merely situations of ‘service provision’, others ‘meet each other half way’; in other cases, one party was ready to make internal changes to meet the needs of the other party, which can be said to be some form of innovation; in other cases, a mediating party helped to ‘bridge the gap’ between one party and the other; and there were cases in which parties performed as equal partners or ‘shoulder to shoulder’.

In other instances, it is possible to speak about ‘*faux*’ co-production, where the term appears to be used, at best, as a euphemism. An example may be when two parties engage in a partnership when one party (in the cases I document, the party with the technical knowledge) knows that the objective of the activity will not yield the intended results. While there is some work focused on the limits of co-production or even on the regressive nature of some practices (see, for instance, the warnings raised by Castán Broto and Neves Alves, 2018), much of the literature appears so far focused on the virtues of co-production. There is, therefore, a need to spell out what is existing co-production and what should have a different term. My research suggests that if co-production is understood as a process where looser and stronger forms of engagement take place over a sustained period of time, then co-productive processes cannot be assessed merely based on one single ‘iteration’ (a moment, event, conjuncture). Co-productive processes may therefore not be entirely made up of ‘co-productive’ moments. It is here where we can distinguish between co-productive moments and processes; both of which can be considered co-productive practices, but nevertheless have different qualities and potentials. In most cases, parties join for mutual benefit, while it is important to note that the benefit may be differential. We can also speak about cases where there were missed opportunities for co-production; where a potential for this could have yielded a ‘joint’ product from the interaction of both parties, instead of merely the delivery of a product by one party at the request of the other.

Table 5 Table of example of strategies employed by the participants within the practices

	WINDHOEK	OSHAKATI	GOBABIS
Individualised (or household) market-based strategies	<i>Services have now been individualised.</i>	<i>Access to sanitation was individually undertaken .</i>	
Collective self-help strategies	<i>Undertaken with close support from local government and with extraordinary central government support.</i>	<i>Undertaken with almost no state involvement, only local government support.</i>	<i>Undertaken with support from local government and eventual central government support.</i>
Dependency-based strategies		<i>Group relinquishes some plots to accommodate the demands of the traditional land owner (a retired politician).</i>	
Exclusion strategies			<i>Some neighbourhoods in Gobabis have refused to participate, however the accounts were inconclusive on the nature of this.</i>
Social movement strategies	<i>Go to see officials at the Municipality collectively, arguably to exert some form of pressure.</i>		<i>Confront the LA with the issue of relocation;</i>
Promotes activities?	<i>Yes, the leadership of the group has helped other groups.</i>	<i>Through SDFN/NHAG standard learning exchanges.</i>	<i>Through SDFN/NHAG standard learning exchanges.</i>
Encourages further potential of members?		<i>Through SDFN/NHAG standard learning exchanges.</i>	<i>Through SDFN/NHAG standard learning exchanges.</i>
Free play?	<i>Will organise a party when the group attains freehold tenure and winds up.</i>	<i>Ceremonies to mark key events, common in SDFN/NHAG processes.</i>	<i>Ceremonies to mark key events, common in SDFN/NHAG processes.</i>
Service provision	<i>Planner submitted the layouts for approval to statutory bodies.</i>	<i>Installation of electricity and waste bins.</i>	<i>Sewerage infrastructure financed with central government funds.</i>
'Meeting each other half way'	<i>Municipal worker asking group to take measurements so he could draw the water supply plans.</i>	<i>Installation of water supply up to block level; inhabitants installing water reticulation within block.</i>	<i>Municipal technical staff drawing plans based on the layouts produced during planning studios.</i>
Internal innovation	<i>System of financing water meters by distributing repayments on every top-up.</i>		<i>Municipal tenure certificates.</i>
Mediation for both parties to meet	<i>Surveyor assisting the group in finding solutions to comply with municipal traffic engineers.</i>		<i>Hiring a plumber to teach inhabitants how to install pipes.</i>
'Shoulder to shoulder' (as equal partners)	<i>'Informal demarcation' exercise between the municipal planner and the group.</i>		<i>Planning studios.</i>
'Faux' co-production			<i>Discussing land use matters when they are not included in final layouts.</i>
Missed opportunities	<i>The drawing of layouts of the houses.</i>	<i>Housing construction collectively organised to reduce costs.</i>	

Based on categories found in Mitlin (2008), Ortiz (2004), and Huchzermeyer (2013).

In all cases, the notion of *substantive agreement* is fundamental; this refers to the situation where parties commit on matters of vital importance and where subsequent adherence to the decision took place, even in testing times. The idea of substantive agreement is also an alternative to the notion of ‘who leads’, which appears as a central concern in debates on social movements, as the actual virtue in co-production appears to be ‘who agrees’, ‘who is willing to make a compromise’, and ‘who fulfils the commitment’. The ‘ownership’ of the leadership position is, therefore, from this point of view, secondary to *the co-ownership of the process* (for further discussion, see 6.1.3 below).

In some cases, the practices ‘call the state into question’, as Lefebvre’s texts on *autogestion* note. In the cases I document, however, this did not happen in a confrontational way. The case of Windhoek took place in a way in which the grassroots engaged government decisively but did not overstep the mark; they stood their ground even when they were called to the highest government office. This mobility from the lowest-income neighbourhoods up to the top echelons of financial and state power can be said to have given the grassroots a broader sight of the ‘totality’ of society in the Lefebvrian sense, ‘from the base to the summit’ (see 2.2.2 above). There is also a particular relevance to the fact that central government has opened its doors to a grassroots-led process (e.g. Windhoek) or supported the installation of infrastructure in an informal settlement (e.g. Gobabis): that of implicitly recognising the ‘messiness’ of grassroots and the need to act in a grey zone to address the challenges that informal urban development poses to the state. This could befit what Castán Broto and Neves Alves deem as a “new system of signification or change of paradigm” (2018). The practice in Gobabis may have also called the state into question, and experienced something again related to the Lefebvrian ‘totality’ through international exchanges; however, at least to the extent in which I document it, this appears less the work of the grassroots and more the result of decisions taken among professionals and NGO workers. I return to the discussion of ‘who initiates/leads’ in a section below (see 6.1.3 below).

In none of the cases has there been a group employing exclusion strategies, although in Namibia there are emerging movements starting to take a more confrontational stance at the discourse level (see 4.1.4 above). This is in line with some of the literature by Mitlin and

Watson that observes that co-production tends *not* to take radical measures (see 2.2.1 above), and by doing so seemingly falls within the ‘mutilated movement’ that Lefebvre speaks about (see 2.1.1 above). At the same time, we have argued that if one broadens the understanding of what a ‘radical transformation’ may be; one can find that ‘patient’ strategies might also yield significant transformations. The kinds of strategies that characterise the practices I document appear here as varied, and although some may feel the need for fitting a practice within a certain category, I argue that the needs and situations are so varied that the potential for different kinds of strategies to emerge is significant. This coincides with a point raised in a recent paper by Mitlin reflecting on decades of co-productive practices in the Global South (2018). A closer study revisiting cases in Namibia may be able to qualify the kinds of strategy that have been more or less successful, or whether some of the activities that may appear as ‘free play’ or ‘encouraging further potential of members’ can indeed be considered as such or not. These are not merely gratuitous ‘signs’ qualifying the ‘mood’ throughout the process, but rather presenting new attributes to the collective processes; not necessarily in terms of succeeding in attaining a material benefit (e.g. land for housing) but also in the positive experiences and lessons learnt through them. However, my study only accounts on a variety of strategies employed (see Table 5) throughout a period of time spanning at least two decades in the three cases. This brings me back to a point that I raised earlier, that it is not possible to define the practice based on one single ‘co-productive’ moment; a reverse of this argument would be that co-productive processes may not necessarily be composed only of co-productive practices. Therefore, the conclusion that emerges is that it is the *sequence* of events sustained over a period of time that eventually enables us to speak about co-productive processes. The period of time at stake is also a relevant factor, as in the case of Namibia, the country has existed for less than thirty years and can be said to be still a relatively recent state; which raises the question on whether these practices are only ‘a moment’ while the state develops new capacities. So far, what appears to be the actual requirement for co-productive processes to take place is the possibility of an open door from the side of participants; mediators bridging the gaps between the parties; and eventual substantial agreement in undertaking a common task for a sustained period of time.

6.1.2. The rhythms of co-production

For better reading of this section, please refer to the visuals in annexures (see 9.2 below).

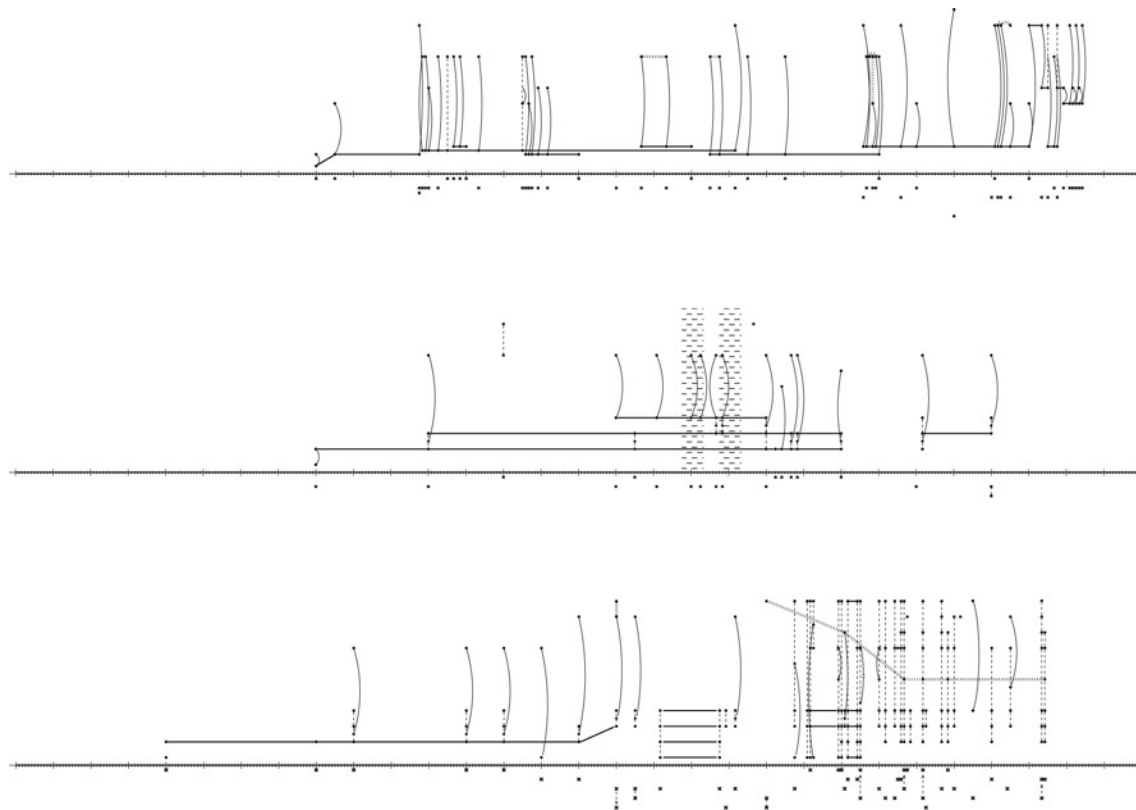


Figure 41 Visual of the three processes in Annexures without legend: Windhoek (top), Oshakati (middle), and Gobabis (bottom).

The rhythm of the practices is a useful indication to think about the practices in the abstract. By using the term ‘rhythm’ I intend to describe the pace and variance at which the iterations in the process took place. Up to this point, the literature on co-production has not yet abstracted the processes in question in order to look at it in such terms; the literature on *autogestion*, on the other hand, often does not zoom in on the detail and nuances of each iterations, as it tends to focus more on the overall political act of diminishing the centrality of the state through more autonomous practices. My work, however, documents in as much detail as possible the iterations of each of the practices, which has allowed me to organise each practice not only in terms of narrative (as I do in Chapter 5 above) but also in a visual

spatial display organising each event in terms of the stakeholder that participated³⁸, the geographical scales involved³⁹, as well as some general qualification of the event⁴⁰ (see Annexure 3, in 9.2 below). This yields a kind of notation that allows for an analysis of the practices in abstract. This exercise is not, as I have explained before, with the intent of ‘typologising’ practices, but to highlight the variety of ways in which practices can take place. I argue that such practices are highly situational and that they may be best enabled through a flexible framework allowing parties to act and give meaning to what the spatial practice would need to be in a given case. ‘Typologising’ practices, or developing types tailored for each case (which in turn presupposes there is a limited and identifiable amount of cases), defeats the potential of co-productive practices, as they crystallise somewhere in between established frames. A meta-argument with respect to the analysis of the rhythms of co-production is that the hitherto lack of abstract thinking regarding co-production, puts into question the solidity of its theoretical grounds so far; which can be therefore an analytical contribution that my study hereby posits.

It is possible to make a number of observations based on this kind of abstract analysis. For instance, it is possible to note how each stakeholder joining the process brings her own timeframe and imperatives, modifying the rhythm that the process had been following up to that point. In the best of cases, this is negotiated in a way that suits all stakeholders; in other instances, one stakeholder’s timeframe prevails. Each participant has her own leverage, which each uses to make the setup more enabling from their standpoint. It is important to note the capacities of each stakeholder to control time, which can be said to be different in every case. In Gobabis, the timeframe of contractors, which was determined by the timeframe of government funding, accelerated the process of re-blocking in Freedom Square (see 5.3.5 above). The settlement was already undergoing re-blocking, and while this may have followed other rhythms more in relation to social processes (e.g. negotiations, education, resolution of claims), the pressure to accommodate contractors hastened the

³⁸ Whether the participant is an international stakeholder, government, university, local government, traditional authority, private sector, an NGO, a Federation (of grassroots associations), a grassroots association, or inhabitants.

³⁹ Whether the event took place at the local (neighbourhood), city (municipal, town), national, regional (Southern or Sub-Saharan Africa), or international (global, planetary) level.

⁴⁰ An engagement that facilitated a way forward, an engagement that slowed down the process, an engagement that was indirect but consequential, a partnership between two parties through which the contact with a third one was made possible, a sequence of processes, a confrontation, or a matter influenced by a natural event.

process. In the case of Windhoek, the tense social situation that the group experienced owing to differential consumption of water and collective billing needed an urgent technical intervention to be defused (see 5.1.9 above). However, delays caused by technical considerations essentially forced the group to simply endure the situation. In both cases, however, the technical imperatives tended to prevail over social ones.

While the previous paragraph dealt with eventualities that would arise during the process, another rhythm is determined by the ordinary institutional calendars of partners. In the case of the planning studios in Gobabis, the university's academic calendar set the pace of the process. Universities themselves are organised in hierarchies, and the participating Department of Architecture and Spatial Planning had to follow the university's calendar; which in turn is shaped by national public holidays, and school schedules; which themselves are set at the Ministerial level. Even if the cooperation between the university and the NGO and Federation had been institutionally agreed upon at the highest levels through a memorandum of understanding⁴¹ (MOU), the planning studios were only a small event in the wider context, so the imperatives of such a large institution appear as difficult to negotiate on the ground. A subtler matter is the rhythm that grassroots and inhabitants themselves follow and impose. This is something that in the literature on SDI is deemed 'rituals' (Muller & Mitlin, 2007; Chitekwe-Biti, 2013), which can refer to the practice of saving, but also to a house 'opening' when it has been finished. Meetings within groups, particularly saving groups, happen weekly on Sundays. For Federated groups, there are also regional and national meetings that take place, where representatives of individual groups report back and discuss matters of common relevance. Then there are the meetings between groups and other parties; however, these are usually only attended by representatives. Meetings between grassroots and other parties usually take place during working hours. However, several employees in local authorities (LAs), particularly those dealing directly with inhabitants, make themselves available after hours; but this is something that is naturally undesirable from their point of view, as it takes time away from their own private lives. The visuals that I have produced do not capture the 'rituals' of everyday events, something I would here deem 'micro-rhythms'. However, some matters

⁴¹ NUST and NHAG-SDFN signed a memorandum of understanding in 2015.

outlined in this chapter need to be considered in the background when discussing the nature of varying rhythms, as these may be factors confronting priorities among participants, making it difficult to place such varying rhythms in synchronicity.

6.1.3. Shifting from 'leadership' to *co-ownership*

The questions of who leads and who represents can be a device to start tracing different kinds of co-productive or *autogestive* practices. Regarding the question of leadership and representativity, the literature on co-production tends to place emphasis on the question of 'who triggers', without delving much further into the power distribution among participants. Conversely, the literature on participation tends to be more explicit in the gradient of practices, ranging from those which are rather tokenistic, manipulative, or for display purposes, to the ones that are empowering, self-initiated, and leading to citizen control (see 2.2.3 above). It is these 'higher' categories of participation where the overlap to the tenets of *autogestion* becomes more visible. In the Oshakati case there are five different saving groups, which have no constitution that governs how the groups are to inhabit Kanjengedi South. As I have documented, the Federation coordinator has only assisted the groups in resolving everyday matters in the most legitimate way possible (see 5.2.4 above). The Federation coordinator described the case of a church that was not officially a member of the Federation but was allowed to participate in the scheme on condition that they demonstrated good behaviour (see 5.2.5 above). While the notion of 'good behaviour' was not defined, the fact that there have not been any evictions documented in the area speaks of either general good behaviour, or tight social control between members and/or inhabitants. Tight social control is noted by scholars observing the development of politics at the national scale in Namibia (Melber, 2014), and is perhaps a factor to consider also at this scale. In the case of Gobabis, the area of Freedom Square was subdivided into several sectors, each represented by an association. However, no agreements regulating everyday life have been found; and the question of how to encourage social organising in Gobabis' informal settlements is still under discussion. In these two cases, the relationship between 'the state' and 'civil society' could be said to be played by local government on the one side

and the federation leader representing several savings groups on the other. However, this clarity does not hold throughout the many events that I have documented.

I propose to use these examples to engage with the question of 'who leads' within the process. The question of leadership and representativity in socio-spatial processes could be the subject of a full study, which could qualify (e.g. how they lead) and even quantify (e.g. how much each party leads) representativity. However, in my study, I present only the moments in the practices when representativity was at stake. In the case of Gobabis, stakeholders spoke about 'ownership of the process' (see 5.3.11 above). This referred to the ownership of Federation members over the process of savings, access to Federation funds, construction of houses, or improvement of living conditions. One can also speak of different ownerships of the process. In this way, 'owning the process' may be something pertaining to two, three or more parties. Without delving into 'quantifying' the ownership of this process, one can say that in the Windhoek case, it was the Committee who 'led'; however, their partnership with professionals and some staff members of the LA was fundamental to this process which can therefore be said to be 'co-owned' with them. In the Oshakati case, the process was 'owned' by the Federation and, perhaps up to a certain extent, also with the LA and the NGO. In Gobabis, analysis is much more complex, considering the heterogeneity of the process, the various stakeholders involved, and the fact that the process is still in flux. The situation when one party reaches out to another, and then the partnership of collaboration enables the possibility of approaching a third party has also been observed. The key example in this respect is the 'informal demarcation' exercise undertaken 'shoulder to shoulder' between the Municipal planner and the members of Dibasen (see 5.1.3 above). More than 'who triggered', this is distinctively a process co-owned by the parties involved and arguably the most horizontal power relationship documented in my research.

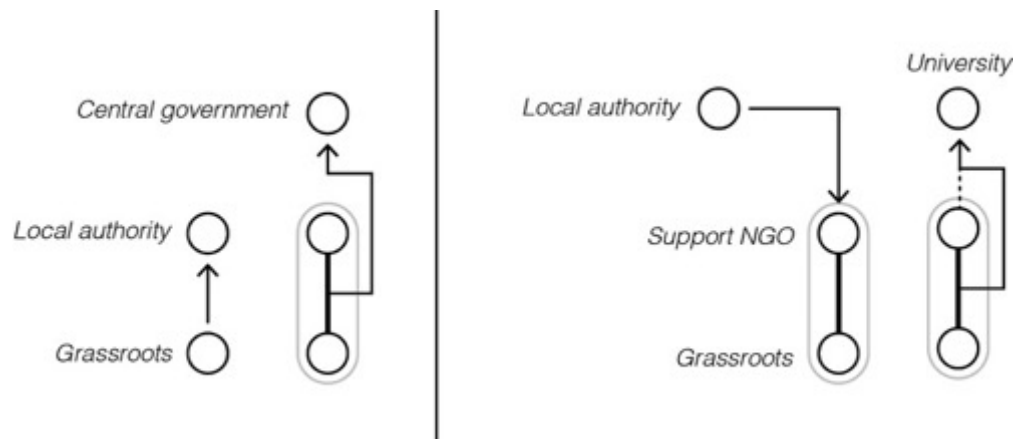


Figure 42 Visual of situation when one part approaches the other and, through this engagement, the possibility to reach out to a third party emerges. The examples visualised are when Dibasen approached the LA to apply for central government acceptance of plots smaller than 300m² (see 5.1.12) (left) and when Gobabis Municipality requested the support NGO to assist with the situation in their informal settlements and they in turned partnered with the university (see 5.3.3) (right).

6.1.4. Institutionalised co-production or institutionality as a strategy?

Inhabitants and grassroots may be regarded as ‘civil society’ or ‘movements’, but the way they operate is similar in character to institutions. In the case of Windhoek, the Dibasen Homeless Committee of Katutura is a registered organisation with a governance structure, election procedures, and a constitution governing its functions. It is, in its own right, an institution. This problematises the views regarding the classic ‘state-civil society’ divisions outlined above (see 2.2.2 and 2.2.3 above), which often do not consider these interactions as two institutions liaising with each other regardless of their divergent size and faculties. Such literature sees this relation as one institution liaising with a non-institution, ‘members’, or ‘users’. Therefore, the evidence raised here regarding ‘state-civil society relations’ seems to coincide less with the ‘opposition’ mentioned by Bayart or the quest for differentiation that Allen observes in analyses in the 1980s and 90s, and more with the fluidity among parties that Utas and Lindell refer to when they speak about ‘networked life’ (see 2.2.3 above). This fluidity is enabled by reconfigurations in both the grassroots and the state (local and central) levels, as we will see below.

The use of written agreements, such as a memorandum of understanding (MoU), may suggest that the co-production has been institutionalised; or that some form of power has been decentralised to other parties, particularly those at the grassroots level (see Table 6). In the case of Gobabis, the community organiser mentioned how the MoU ‘was presented’

to the community as a way of ‘working together’ with the LA. Strictly speaking, the MoU is only between the NGO and Federation with the Municipality (see 5.3.4 above). This creates two administrative difficulties. Firstly, only some inhabitants are members of the Federation, not ‘a member of the settlement’. Yet, the Federation is *de facto* the entity that in many instances adopts the role of representing the settlement. Secondly, for those who are represented in the Federation, their commitment to the upgrading process is in theory mediated by their commitment to the Federation. While saving may be a voluntary activity, upgrading is assumed to be a general process undertaken by the entire settlement, but the narrative suggests that it had been previously agreed by everyone. While the MoU may represent only a section of inhabitants, in effect it enabled a larger process with benefits for a wider number than those people in the Federation’s membership. The use of the memorandum of understanding (MOU), can therefore be regarded as a strategy, rather than a purely bureaucratic document.

In a similar way, the Federation and their support NGO have a MoU with the University; however, activities take place without much reference to this document. In the Gobabis process, the participation of students on site was made possible through the agreement between the institutions. On the other hand, the Municipal planner in the Windhoek, now a lecturer at the University, continues to take her students to Dibasen’s neighbourhood as part of their coursework. This takes place without the need of an agreement between Dibasen and the university (in this case, the Namibia University of Science and Technology (NUST)). However, there are concrete efforts for this experiential learning to shape the curriculum of socio-spatial disciplines at the university (ILMI, 2017) and at the time of writing, there were at least two on-going courses at NUST partnering with the Federation and the NGO in Gobabis. In addition, student bodies have also supported the process independently by joining the NGO in ‘city-wide’ planning activities. Based on the experiences here outlined, it is not yet clear whether the contribution of university involvement tends more to the substantive rather than the reputational; but what can be said is that there is evidence of both. While it is also evident the process of institutionalising this way of knowledge co-creation may be slow and gradual, the kinds of activities documented here shows that this transition has already started.

6.1.5. Asymmetries in the process

The most common asymmetries recorded in the cases I document are seen in the differing accounts of the facts. The question of inequality and co-productive processes have been noted by Castán Broto and Neves Alves (2018), who question in particular the faculties of co-production in addressing structural inequities. However, the inequities documented in co-productive practices may be less inherent to the process and more pertaining to the point of departure of some participants who may not have the knowledge or the confidence to bring the authority to account. In some cases, differences were negligible, but in others, they became a source of conflict. In the case of Windhoek, Dibasen was allocated two blocks of land by the Municipality; accordingly two communal water taps and two toilets were installed. However, the group leader explained that the two toilets were installed because one toilet was intended for women and the other for men. This rather minor misinterpretation can be said to have no negative consequences (see 5.1.4 above). Similarly, in the case of Oshakati, the delimitation of the perimeter of the land assigned to SDFN was conducted by a professional surveyor. While the Federation holds that this was done as part of the Flexible Land Tenure (FLT) project, the FLT project team argue that while the surveyor may have been an employee of the project, she did so either on a voluntary basis or at the request of the LA. Similarly, when the project in Gobabis was extended from Freedom Square to include all informal areas (see 5.3.8 above), the explanation from the community organiser and federation member was that the decision was taken because of the success of activities so far. In contrast, the university lecturer explained that this decision was merely due to the granting of additional funds from an external organisation, a view which is not necessarily in conflict with that of the community organiser, but that certainly provides additional information. However, other stakeholders noted with suspicion the fact that the project was extended without careful analysis of aspects of the project that were successful and others that might have needed adjustment. This third account is in fact opposite to the first one, but is not necessarily in conflict with the second (see Figure 43). In these cases, the party at a disadvantage is the grassroots; professionals, LA and government appear in this example in a privileged position to understand what is taking place from the technical point of view due to their status. In some cases, the professional as the mediating party has

the implicit responsibility of mediating the information imbalances inherent to the status quo; considering her mandate has not formally been conferred to him by the constituencies it is supposed to mediate (see 2.2.1 above).



Figure 43 Visual on the asymmetries in information: the case accounted for in section 5.1.4 (top), and the one in section 5.3.8 (bottom).

It has been demonstrated that the relationship between inhabitants and professionals is one that is uneven from the onset (see 6.1.5 above), and some interactions between the parties may inadvertently reproduce and entrench some of these conditions. Here one can again evoke the warning that Castán Broto and Neves Alves make, in that “when co-production is approached as a mere means to improve efficiency in service provision, equity questions are displaced” (2018: 373). In the case of Gobabis, the community organiser highlights the participatory nature of the process, stating that it was ‘the people’ who designed the plans and who decided on development priorities. The process was designed to create a deliberative space where inhabitants are able to identify developmental needs and prioritise them through majority vote. However, one university lecturer expressed uncertainty on the extent to which the final layouts reflect the participatory nature of the process. From a professional point of view, the ‘output’ may be questionable, and require considerable re-design to comply with legal and technical requirements. The role of the professional becomes one of holding the productive tension of allowing a social process to take place, while also bearing the pressures and responsibilities for an output acceptable to professional bodies and national legislation. The architecture student furthermore reported that the ‘participatory planning’ process was preconfigured in a way that did not allow for unique spatial qualities to emerge. That comment stands as a self-critique of the

professionals involved: their experience with regard to pedagogy, social engagement, and process-based design should have enabled the participatory planning process to include spatial elements. The result is an uneven one because the process remains largely controlled from both ends by professionals: from how the conditions for collaborations are decided at the onset, and thereafter when the outcomes from the process are 'corrected' to adhere to professional and regulatory imperatives. The danger of reproducing oppressive structures through co-production that Castán Broto and Neves Alves warn about (2018), comes to mind here; therefore the decisive contribution, if not leadership, of the grassroots in these processes appears a fundamental factor to make the process of socio-spatial production less uneven.





Figure 44 Photographs of layouts defined through participatory dynamics with inhabitants of informal settlements, NGO workers, and university lecturers and students. Photographs courtesy of Martin Namupala.

6.1.6. Autonomy, self-determination, and the 'age' of the practice

Self-determination and autonomy are issues that can be observed at the organisational level, as well as on the individual level.

At the organisational level, most LAs in Namibia do not have the degree of autonomy that is common for local government to have in contexts where their revenue streams are significant enough to grant them independent room for manoeuvre. Political dependency on higher political structures is exemplified by how central roles, such as those of the Mayor and councillors, are in practice subject to decisions in the ruling party (see 2.2.2 above). While this does not necessarily prevent a conflict of interest between the local and national government, it does limit the extent of disagreement. Grassroots groups, on the other hand, have demonstrated a degree of autonomy vis-à-vis both LA and central government. The examples of this were seen when the grassroots in Windhoek achieved their right to establish themselves on the land that best suited their needs; and in the case of Gobabis, to

remain where they were. While the decision was indeed theirs, a process of negotiation entailed some degree of compromise; but also of substantive agreement. In the case of Windhoek, the group is planning to disband when members attain individual freehold tenure. Therefore, the faculty to terminate the collective process and to end their institutional life, emerges also as a power of groups. While this seems to befit the utilitarian nature that Albrechts observes in early co-production (see 2.2.1 above), this can also be read as a political statement (i.e. rights-based); in that the group has the right to terminate its own institutional life.

At the individual level, the issue of autonomy and self-determination can be discussed by looking at the voluntary nature of the process. Associations are legally regarded as voluntary, but if membership is required to access a basic service, obtain or retain tenure, then to describe such associations as 'voluntary' is misleading. In the cases of Windhoek and Oshakati, the process started with saving groups. In both cases, access to land and housing has been attained, but not access to freehold individual title; the land remains in the ownership of the group or the LA. If leaving the collective may result in the loss of one's place of living, the voluntary nature of the decision is at best relative; even when the outgoing member is refunded what she has financially invested. Another example is that of meetings organised on a purported voluntary basis, but that in effect are sometimes vital as key decisions are discussed, such as relocation. These are different from the 'voluntary' (yet statutory) meetings that are organised by local authorities and professionals (e.g. environmental impact assessments, re-zoning consultations), where attendance is optional and the impact medium or long-term. In the case of Gobabis in particular, issues of relocation due to re-blocking were at stake. Without attending, someone may afterwards find that she is required to relocate her structure without understanding how this fits within an overall process of re-blocking and not, say, a process of forced removal. In Gobabis, it was reported that those who obstructed the process were precisely those who had not attended the community meetings. A questionable side of grassroots organisations aimed at improving members' living conditions, may be appreciated when such improvements entail displacement of non-members (e.g. through re-blocking) or the temporary granting of goods or services that are conditionally attached to membership. In this case, the individual autonomy of inhabitants vis-à-vis the grassroots organisation, can be said to be minimal.

While the question of autonomy is central to the debates on *autogestion*, it can also be found in the debates on co-production and community finance. Mitlin notes that SDFN movements engage the state while ‘at the same time maintaining a degree of autonomy’ (see 2.2.1 above) and Mitlin, Colenbrander and Satterthwaite note that autonomy and flexibility are critical features for grassroots-led finance (2018:7). However, while in the previous two examples autonomy is used as a way to ‘draw a line’ when engaging other parties, autonomy in *autogestion* seems to suggest less interest in engaging other parties. This can be related to the Lefebvrian understanding of *autogestion* being one in which the state eventually ‘withers away’ and is eventually replaced by the *autogestive* process. However, it is also worth asking whether some degree of co-production is necessary to give way to the possibility of *autogestion*; in other words, some engagement between parties, particularly the state and the grassroots, before giving way to a thinking about *autogestion*. While this may at the moment seem far-fetched in the case of Namibia, one can also argue that the relevance of ‘the state’ is indeed in question vis-à-vis the large number of informal settlements that exist in the country today. This, however, does not necessarily indicate *autogestion*, but would perhaps be seen as an enabling factor for *autogestion*. This would support the assumptions that *autogestion* emerges where the state is relatively absent; however, it may well be the other way around. The question of whether co-production emerges where there is little or overwhelming state presence, is a point raised below (see 6.2.3 below). The element of ‘free play’, which is highlighted by Huchzermeyer as a useful way to contrast ‘the creative’ versus ‘the productive’ (see 2.2.1 above) is, however, precisely one of the least apparent aspects in the three practices I document; at least in the way that I have done so.

Lastly, in the case of Windhoek, ‘the end’ or goal of the practice seems to be individual freehold tenure, which should the group disband, would substitute collective autonomy with a situation in which each ‘owner’ will now have fend for herself when engaging the state and other powerful parties. This also raises the question of what *then* would be the reasons to associate once every member is a property owner? Under the current dispensation, a freehold title-holder has almost absolute reign over her property; as long as she is able to afford the bundle of responsibilities associated with it (e.g. rates, services).

The possibilities of association in such a context may tend towards the conservative; as the emergence of various neighbourhood watch associations in Namibian urban areas today (The Namibian, 2016) can exemplify. Another historical factor to consider when discussing the nature of associational life in Namibia is the Apartheid legacy, which caused widespread reluctance to engage in self-organisation and dependence on a centralised power. In the readings of *autogestion* by Ortiz the importance of ‘the age’ of the practices emerges. He writes on how only in ‘more advanced’ stages do practices engage more actively in promoting the potentials of the members (see 2.2.1 above), which can be linked to increased autonomy (and decreased dependency). However, it is also worth recognising that a linear process of consolidation may be a shortcoming of Ortiz’ definition; as it may well be that *autogestion* may both emerge and attenuate at different points. This discussion opens the possibility of shifting the question from ‘is there *autogestion* or not?’ or ‘is there autonomy or not?’ to instead asking in which development stage are the practices currently situated, and whether there may be the possibility of any of these conditions emerging at some other point.

6.2. State, inhabitants, and new-found agencies across participants

This section brings together observations on the nature of the engagement of participants in the practices, as opposed to looking at divisions of ‘the state’ and ‘civil society’. This is not to wish away these divisions but, as I discussed in 6.1.4 above, to allow the nature of the actual contributions of the different participants to these processes emerge without emphasising much in their role beforehand. I start by noting the agency emerging across participants, including some situations where this transcended their original role. I then write about the inner workings of the grassroots, where issues of representativity and legitimacy emerge strongly. I conclude by outlining the new roles that the state adopts in these practices, and how many of these are undertaken in partnership or *de facto* taken over by others.

6.2.1. New agencies across participants

Despite the roles that the participants in these narratives may officially have, most local authorities and professionals transcended their roles and performed in a different capacity to make a way forward possible. Windhoek and Gobabis have a 'community development' unit, which appears to make them better equipped to deal with social matters than is the case with Oshakati, which lacks such a division. However, when I had the opportunity to prompt a LA official there as to whether they had a 'community development' division, he replied that *everyone* at the LA did community development. Perhaps his astute reply may be more pregnant with possibilities than the obvious conclusion that each LA ought to have a 'community development' division. On the other hand, some professionals working in LAs have sometimes found new agency and acted in ways that exceeded their job descriptions by performing different roles, operating after official work hours, or bridging gaps between stakeholders. Some told me informally how they received phone calls in the middle of the night regarding conflicts well beyond their official job description or competency. Here it is pertinent to reflect on Rakodi's observation on how authorities adopt strategies of 'accommodation rather than conflict' (see 2.2.3 above), but in this case, more than 'non-compliance', I observe that this takes largely place because of the realisation of how difficult it is 'to comply', and this therefore prompts authorities and professionals to make attempts to 'meet other parties halfway'. By professionals, I am referring not only to planners or surveyors, but also to social workers⁴². Building on the earlier response of the LA official, it seems that some understand 'social work' as a cross-cutting component that brings technical knowledge to the ground level, activating it as *useful knowledge*. It is through this avenue of meaningful engagement with their constituency that LAs, particularly Gobabis and Windhoek, have found new agency.

Professionals appear also to have found a new role as *mediators*. As has been shown, professionals have in some cases performed independently to support the process, arguably driven by their social commitment. This social role does not substitute in full for the need for 'normal' professionals (see Chamber's definitions in 2.2.2 above) but in fact enables the

⁴² Social work is a 4-year degree offered at UNAM, see 4.1.3.

institution in which such professionals may be based (e.g. local, central government) to function. In some occasions, these *mediators* coached the group to engage in a more informed way with 'normal' professionals. Rather than developing a terminology from these socially-committed professionals (e.g. rogue professionals, insurgent professionals) and by doing so marginalising them to a periphery of 'normal' practice, what I instead suggest is that the role of professionals in the context of Namibia may be altogether transforming. Relevant to this is how the first cohort of Namibian-educated town and regional planners was exposed to the Gobabis practice, something that fundamentally distinguishes them from current professionals who did not have the opportunity to engage locally during their university years.

The university (in this case the Namibia University of Science and Technology [NUST]) appears to have acquired a new role within socio-spatial production in Namibia. There were three modalities in which the university claimed a role in these practices: through the initiative of lecturers; within the framework of institutional partnerships; and more recently through initiatives from student associations. It is also worth noting here that the point of entry for planners and universities in the Windhoek and Gobabis case was an NGO or the LA, not inhabitants or groups directly; which stands in contrast with the pre-requisites that Brown-Luthango (2013) notes in her paper, where well-organised groups of inhabitants seem to be a prerequisite for university-grassroots partnerships. However, this has had a 'snowball' effect, and now other courses are engaging directly with the groups after their exposure through previous experiences. The events documented by this research may have triggered a process of further engagement of university programmes in socio-spatial practices currently taking place in Namibia, which yields the possibility of universities playing an active role in socio-spatial transformation; and arguably a symbiotic relationship with the actors involved in it.

One of the significant assumptions underlying university education of regulated professions is that graduates will perform as professionals in the private sector. Evidence of this is how 'work integrated learning' (WIL) seeks to emulate the work of private firms. We can here repurpose Rakodi's term referring to the grassroots 'mimicking the state' (see 2.2.3 above) and coin the term 'mimicking the private sector' to describe the way in which universities

direct students towards performance within this sector. While private firms can opt to waive their fees for corporate social responsibility (CSR) purposes, it is not considered collegial to undertake 'free work', as it would hinder 'fair' competition between professionals⁴³. This changes the way that 'engagement with inhabitants' is perceived; an example of this is when the university planning lecturer reports how lecturers are sometimes involved 'more than it is necessary' in the process (see 5.3.10 above). Others, such as the architecture student, stressed the need for the discipline to change, so that such engagement would not be considered as 'additional' but as an inherent component of professional practice. In this way, the university planning lecturer's assertion that community engagement 'can't be taught', becomes instead not a separate matter 'to teach', but rather something embedded in the discipline, and therefore taught *as part of* how to undertake professional work today.

To act with agency sometimes entailed an actual change of institution, 'changing hats', and sometimes taking action out of duty (see Figure 45). For the Windhoek case, the Municipal planner, who had both a background in geography and planning, worked at the Municipality when she started supporting the group; when she became a university lecturer, she continued supporting the group. The land surveyor supported the group while also being a lecturer at the university. It is also worth noting that at NUST, where these two professionals are based, academics have a triple mandate of teaching, doing research and community service (Polytechnic of Namibia, 2013). The NGO technical assistant subsequently joined the German cooperation agency. In the case of Gobabis, the Municipal community worker had a background in public administration, and worked in a ministry before joining the LA. The Spanish NGO technical worker also reported to have come from a technical background, and that his desk-bound work experience stood in stark contrast to the wide array of activities that he had to undertake in order to enable the self-enumeration process on the ground. This versatility demonstrated by professionals appears to be in line with some of the observations at international level with regards to 'the future of work' (WEF, 2016) as well as with the skills that some argue put socio-spatial practitioners in the

⁴³ This was a clarification made to me in an interview with a Namibian town and regional planner in the context of the early exploratory interviews I undertook within this project; but that was eventually not referenced here as it accounted for a case I eventually did not include.

Global South at a unique professional advantage (McPhearson et al., 2016). Another reading of the fluidity of the situation relates to the lack of transdisciplinarity in the professional formation, yielding graduates with few skills to deal with situations beyond the curricular competencies. While this may not be necessarily correlate with co-production or *autogestion*, the mobility of roles renders the task of understanding interaction between participants as one in continuous flux.

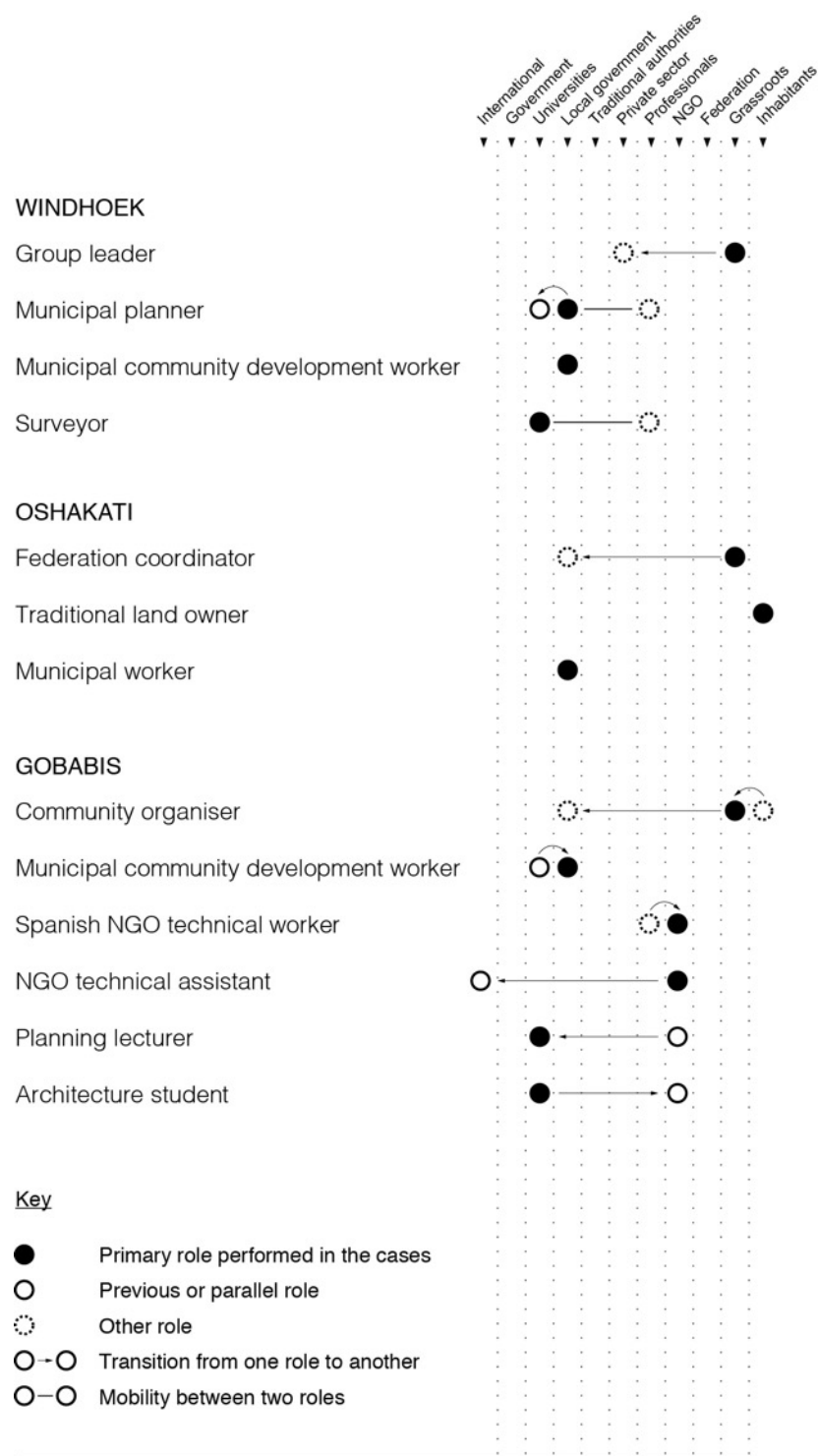


Figure 45 Visual illustrating some participants' changing roles

In the case of Gobabis, community organisers and Federation members assisting with the self-enumeration exercises are now volunteering at the LA in the administration of the upgrading process. Similarly, in the case of Oshakati, the Federation coordinator is now part of the Town Council's 'Land and housing committee', which was set up by the LA to oversee

land applications. This has acquainted them with a view ‘from within’ the LA, which was initially the party that was engaged as ‘the other’ from ‘the outside’. The change in perspective of some of these members is evidence of this: the community organiser in the case of Gobabis, who is now acquainted with the administrative procedures, understands that inhabitants’ demands can’t be followed up immediately. He suddenly finds himself in a position of explaining the reasoning of the LA to fellow inhabitants (see 5.3.11 above). This coincides with the observations that Mayer does in her account of social movements ‘in the (post-)neoliberal city’, where members of the grassroots eventually ‘switch sides’. While this young organiser may indeed be criticised as a member of the grassroots ‘switching sides’, it can also be considered as something that enabled him to perform a better mediating role. Therefore, the role of the mediator can be seen as a way to expand a vision of roles from where one is either ‘within’ or ‘against’ to rather *in between*.

6.2.2. Within the grassroots: legitimacy and representativity

In the course of this research I have sought to differentiate between inhabitants and the grassroots; the former simply referring to inhabitants, while the latter suggesting some form of association. When I have spoken about ‘the group’ or ‘the Federation’, I have referred specifically to the grassroots association in question (e.g. Dibasen, SDFN group). However, not every member of the federation or group participated equally, and there needs to be a differentiation between ‘the group leadership’ and ‘the group’ as a whole. In the case of Windhoek, leaders had been elected and it was they who undertook most of the activities; in Oshakati and Gobabis, it was representatives, not elected leaders, who assumed most of the duties relating to inhabitants and the grassroots. These actors held the political power of representing their constituency when dealing with other stakeholders. It is this political power that may have generated the reported fear of ‘competition’ among LAs in the early cases of participatory socio-spatial development in the 1990s (see 4.1.2 and 4.2.3 above). Here we can evoke Leduka’s definition of legitimacy as a common understanding of the rules regulating transactions, which he distinguishes from ‘trust’ (see 2.3.1 above). His notion of ‘common understanding’ resonates very much in these cases. One of the strongest moments where the collective modality proved legitimacy was in keeping with the

‘everyone must benefit equally’ ethos. I would not suggest this as an essentialism, but it is important to highlight how the search for equality is a value embedded in these practices. The times when it was perceived that this was not the case invariably gave rise to conflict. Groups can also be said to have a ‘centre’ (i.e. group leadership, most active members) and a ‘periphery’ (i.e. less active members, and even non-members), but this observation emerged only after the fieldwork was completed, so it was not investigated fully. This may be considered a limitation of my study.

The way matters are deliberated upon within the practices can be illustrated both in everyday decisions and in the election of representatives. It is important to note that the large number of meetings that the process demanded, at times generated frustrations among participants, particularly if members’ active participation was required. In Dibasen, it was largely the committee’s elected leaders that had to undertake most of the actual administrative tasks. In the case of Gobabis, the most active members participating in the process of upgrading were not elected, and in the case of Oshakati it was a Federation coordinator elected at a higher level who was largely tasked with managing the process. Therefore, the question of how representatives come to play that role becomes a relevant matter for further discussion.

6.2.3. Restructuring the state, repositioning its role

As powerful and influential as the central government may be in the political economy of Namibia, it appears to have played only a ‘special’ if not or marginal role in the practices I document. The role of the state (both local and central government, depending on the context) in the co-production literature remains crucial, while in literature on *autogestion* there is an explicit objective of reducing the eminent position of the state. In the cases I document, the local government level appears as the space where the government role was most relevant, despite the fact that central government was called upon to resolve certain matters (e.g. exemption for plots of less than 300m²) or to source funds that would be impossible to mobilise locally. An example of this latter point is the once-off grant that central government availed for water infrastructure in Gobabis; a sum that would have

otherwise been highly difficult to mobilise through savings. Most of the efforts that made the spatial production of the cases possible took place at the grassroots level, with the support of the Federation and the NGO; or with the assistance of professionals, students, or university lecturers. The roles that are, therefore, traditionally attributed to the state, appear here as performed or at the very least facilitated to a certain level by various institutions.

If indeed the role of the state has changed, how is this so? This matter can be illustrated by looking at the much-heralded objective of ‘decentralisation’ that central government is in principle seeking (Republic of Namibia, 2015). This relates to the observations that Bratton made on the paradox in which the African continent found itself regarding being encouraged to create and strengthen state institutions at a time when the world was making a general turn towards reducing state intervention (see 2.2.2 above). The case of Gobabis presents a local form of titling, which is a considerable change in views that nationally it is central government who holds the monopoly of issuing land rights. In the cases I document, the state relied greatly on the additional efforts of ‘non-state’ actors (e.g. NGO, Federation, academics). This contradicts Watson’s observations on co-production, where she notes that the balance of power remains ‘firmly on the state’ (see 2.2.1 above); although this may be the case in theory, some practices (e.g. Oshakati) have developed in the almost total absence of the (central) state. However, a structural inequity in this is how responsibilities and functions decentralise, but not the funds to remunerate the performance of such functions. The ‘centrality/periphery’ dialectic that Bourdieu talks about (see 2.2.2 above) appears here to be only partly decoupled: ‘the centre’ renounces or devolves certain responsibilities to the periphery, but not the means for ‘the periphery’ to perform these duties in addition to their current tasks. This rather ‘piecemeal decentralisation’, may in fact create opportunities for co-production. While Mitlin observes in the literature that co-production takes place in the context of ‘weak and reducing’ states (see 2.2.2 above), others note how co-production can also occur as a reaction to a ‘statist’ context (Li et al., 2018). While some functions that were traditionally performed by the state may be observed here as being performed by another party, it can also be said that the definition of the state may also therefore be in the process of change (see Table 6). These observations do not allow for conclusions, but it does expose the field of local

government as one of strategic importance for Namibia's urban future and the field of central government as in a process of restructuring, therefore seeing its role in the production of space repositioned.

Table 6 Roles traditionally attributed to the state¹, and who performed these in the practices documented.

	WINDHOEK	OSHAKATI	GOBABIS
Regulating land	<i>Group: administers land at the everyday/ground level; LA: adherence to town planning scheme; Government: adherence to government directive (min. plot size), registration of blocks of land.</i>	<i>Group: administers land at the everyday/ground level; LA: adherence to town planning scheme.</i>	<i>Group: administers land at the everyday/ground level; LA: adherence to town planning scheme.</i>
Leading future spatial planning	<i>Group, assisted by professionals and LA; approval from LA but required special approval from central government.</i>	<i>Support NGO and Federation; approval from LA.</i>	<i>University, support NGO, Federation, and grassroots/inhabitants; approval from LA.</i>
Accessing finance	<i>Group has accessed a form of state micro-finance (e.g. Build Together Programme [BTP]). Community finance management has also benefitted the group. Government has called large financial institutions to support the group.</i>	<i>Community finance.</i>	<i>Community finance.</i>
Legislating tenure form	<i>LA (statutory): group ownership, eventual individual freehold tenure.</i>	<i>LA eventually issuing titles.</i>	<i>LA eventually issuing titles.</i>
Keeping land registers and cadastres	<i>Deeds Office: The land exists in the central government cadastre, but not as it is being used (it remains as two blocks, instead of 50 individual plots).</i>	<i>Deeds Office: The land does not exist in the central government cadastre as it is being used. LA: SDFN members names are registered, area appears in local plans. Federation/NGO: members registered, plans with layouts drawn by NGO although not executed entirely as in plans.</i>	<i>Deeds Office: The land does not exist in the central government cadastre as it is being used. LA: informal areas do not appear in town planning scheme, but they do in some plans. Federation/NGO: self-enumeration exercise undertaken, future plans and current status laid in plans.</i>
Large landowner for the public good	<i>Group keeps ownership of the land.</i>	<i>Land is partly Municipal, partly encroaching on communal land.</i>	<i>The land remains municipally-owned.</i>

¹ Based on Napier (2013).

6.3. Matters related to land rights and the production of housing

In this section I observe how the practices speak to the on-going and long-standing debates on land rights and the production of housing. Firstly I speak about how land ownership, albeit a powerful device that has proven to be critical to the process, becomes relative depending on the observer. I then speak about how housing, which is a multidimensional issue, seems nevertheless to raise primarily the question of finance in the narratives. I also discuss the importance of local economies emerging in the neighbourhoods as essential in the economic life sustaining the practices. I then discuss how the overall legal and policy framework remains strong and largely uncontested throughout the processes. I conclude by making observations about the spatial aspects of the places that were at stake in these processes.

6.3.1. The changing nature of land ownership

Land ownership was a strong factor in the collective trajectory of the practices I document. Land rights were the pivotal factor that enabled the collective process in the practices. In the case of Windhoek, the ownership of the land lay with the group, which in turn vested considerable powers in the leadership. In the case of Gobabis and Oshakati, the land was still owned by the LA; however, many already perceived that ownership was either with the group or with the individual household. Ownership of land, even if only perceived, appears here as a powerful force. In the case of Windhoek, it enabled the group to effect justice, such as in the case where they were able to secure tenure for a deceased member's child (see 5.1.10 above). However, on other occasions, and coinciding with the observations of Rakodi and Leduka (2003), they resorted to formal institutions (in this case, City Police) in order to protect their property (see 5.1.10 above and 5.1.12 above); more specifically, their *common* property. In the same case, the *individualisation* of title, was by far the longest and most energy-consuming aspect in the Windhoek case. In the Oshakati case, the group expected to eventually benefit from the Flexible Land Tenure (FLT) programme, and in the case of Gobabis, it became clear that Freedom Square will be one of the pilots for this form

of title; in both cases, the tenure that inhabitants hold is so far *de facto*. The practices observed in this study seem indeed to fall within a 'continuum of land rights' (see 2.3.1 above), but more relevant than this is that every practice had the goal of moving towards more secure forms of tenure, if not freehold title. Without FLT, it is unclear how the groups in Gobabis or Oshakati will be able to attain freehold individual title considering the high costs this entails; at least in the eyes of central government. Currently, it can be said that some form of tenure is being held by the inhabitants of the two cases, and while a form of local titling may be underway for those involved (see 5.3.12 above), the question in these cases remains a similar one in the literature on titling so far (e.g. Payne, 2000): whether it is titles or rights that are being sought.

As strong a factor as land ownership can be, it may also become relativised vis-à-vis the vantage point of the participant (see Figure 46). While many LAs remain considerably dependent on central government (see 4.1.2 above), the three LAs in question developed tools allowing them to deal with situations at the local level. In the case of Gobabis and Oshakati, the LAs developed a form of title that aims at providing some form of security of tenure to inhabitants, and to improve their revenue stream. In the case of Windhoek, the LA has used its own records as evidence for its departments to provide services to individual households that would otherwise only be provided where households have individual title deeds (see 5.1.6 above). This was the case for the provision of individual refuse bins for every household, which the LA provided to each individual household even though these were still only two 'block erven' in the eyes of the Deeds Office, not 50 individual plots. The right of a LA to implement its own measures is here less related to the powers vested in the LA through legislation, than to a kind of sovereignty by the LA over their jurisdiction and constituency vis-à-vis the central government.

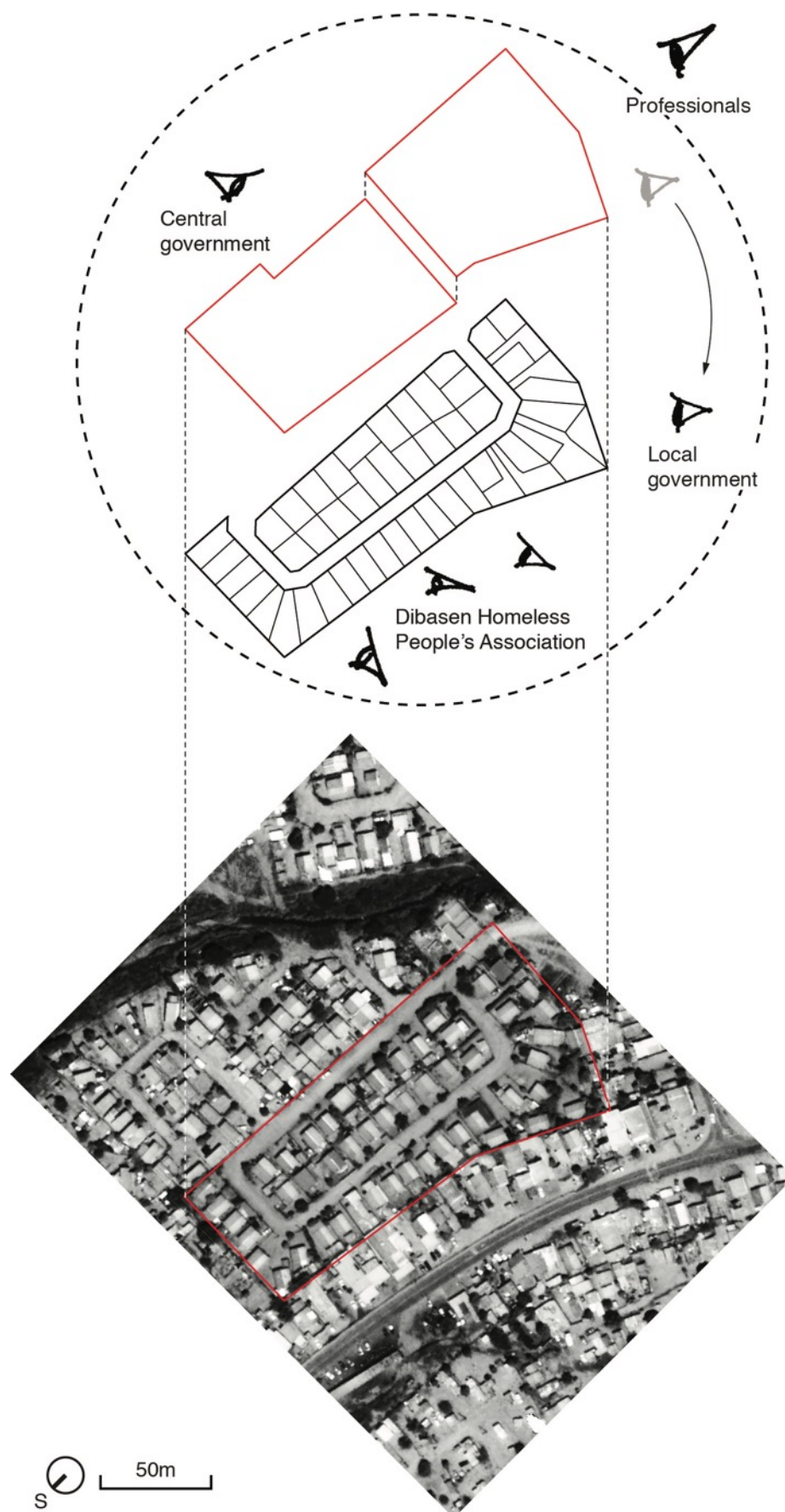


Figure 46 Visual of the 'two views' to the land of Dibasen in Windhoek

In the case of Oshakati, the collective ownership is something that the Federation coordinator understands clearly; particularly when she reminded those households who had to sell their house that they could only sell the house, not the land, as the land ‘belongs to all of us’ (see situations of rental and sale in 5.2.4 above). However, as powerful a device as this may be, the perception of who holds the ownership depends strongly on who is assessing the situation (see Figure 47). Even when the principle of *superficies solo cedit* in the Namibian legal framework (see 4.1.1 above) makes no differentiation between the ownership of the land and that which is contained within it, in the cases of *collective* land ownership, this differentiation is clear and easier to undertake, as the case in Oshakati shows. The perception of ownership is the strongest factor, as strictly speaking the land continues to belong to the LA but *de facto* is managed by the Federation for their members, who have furthermore already erected durable structures on the land. The difference in perceptions of land ownership between the Federation and the traditional land owner was negotiated on the ground, and changes in the layout effected accordingly. What will happen when these changes reach the point of formalisation is a matter of interest, as this case did not profit from as much professional mediation as the other cases. Figure 47 illustrates how the various perceptions of land rights about the same space coexist but not necessarily coincide. In every instance, tenure, even if it is only the promise of eventual attainment of it, has proven to be a powerful magnet for association.

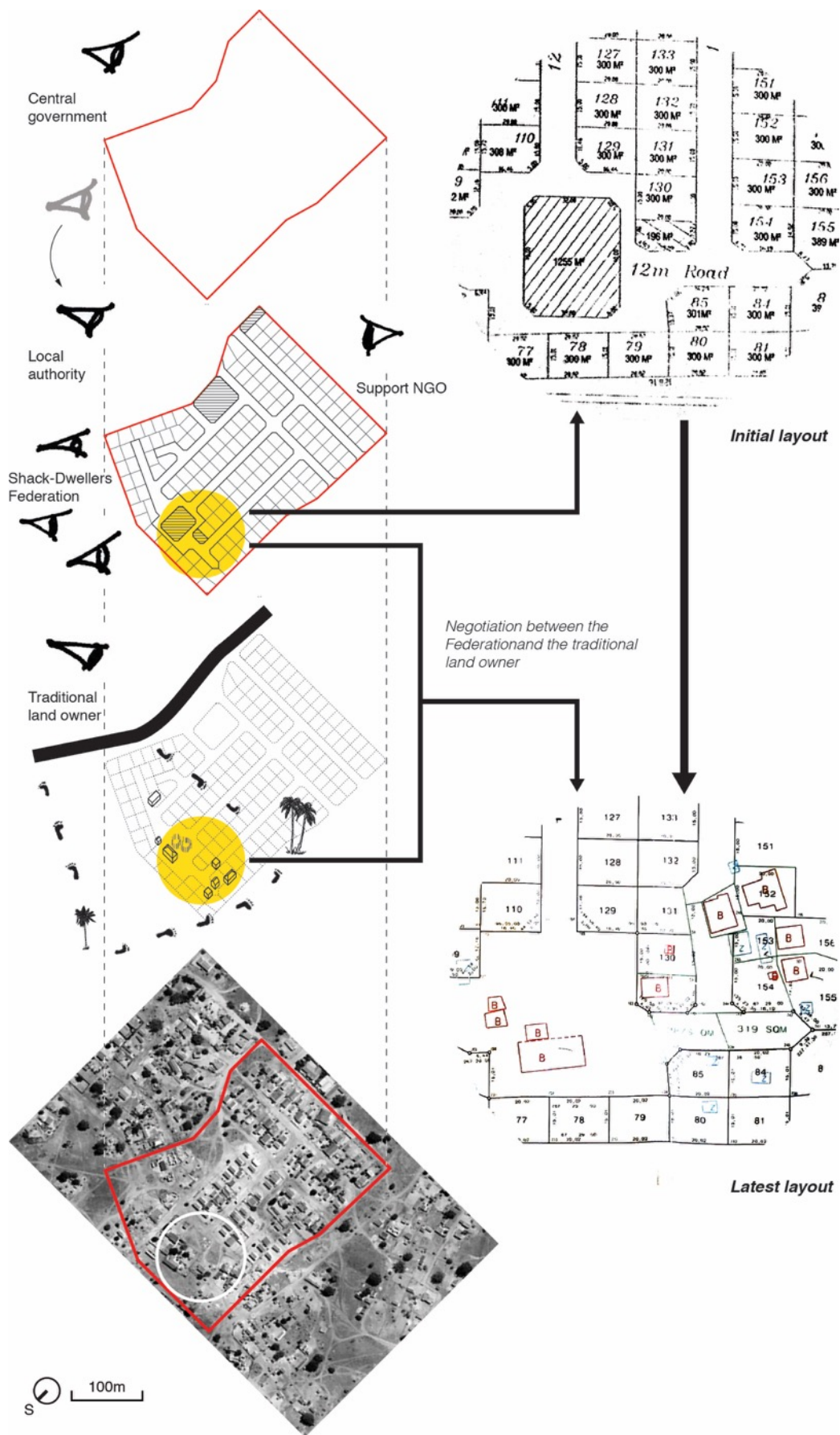


Figure 47 Visual on the different views on the land in Kandjengedi South in Oshakati.

6.3.2. Local economies and resource mobilisation

Each practice gave way to an income-generating activity. Access to land and housing also represents the prospects of rental income, as many households in the Windhoek case have shown. Income from rentals is in turn an enabler of local economies, as inhabitants who are released from the pressures of gaining a basic income have new possibilities to develop entrepreneurial activities. This was documented in the case of Windhoek, where local entrepreneurial activities abound: cake baking, laundry, car repair, take-aways, among others. This was less so in Oshakati, but it may be due to the fact that the site is low-density and peripheral, something that may change in the future if the town continues to grow. Through the process of saving, and accessing and managing urban land for housing, various skills were developed. In the case of Windhoek, the group leader transitioned from a being employed as a gardener to registering a plumbing company which is currently applying for construction tenders. His plumbing skills are sought-after in his neighbourhood, and the administrative skills he has gained suggest a positive outlook for his business to thrive.



Figure 48 Businesses in Dibasen's neighbourhood.

While rent is often regarded as an extractive activity, in the case of Windhoek one can observe both positive and negative effects. Of the households that have backyard rentals,

some have used the rental income to repay for the installation of the services obtained (e.g. individual water meters) while others used the money for entertainment purposes. While my study did not focus on the individual household level to understand the specific conditions that may have led to the different outcomes, it can be said that while the impact of 'informal' rentals is differential and dependent on the individual household characteristics, it is generally positive for the household's livelihood. However, the productive nature of this income stream in terms of improvements in property, education level of children, or even health standards, may be qualified with comparative findings between the survey I have undertaken elsewhere (Delgado, van Rooi & Namupala, forthcoming) and a future hypothetical survey in a number of years. For the moment, what can be observed is that the benefits still currently stem from the extraction of rent from a tenant at a rate that cannot be considered affordable, even for the landlady herself.

The three cases here are largely composed of low-income groups, but it would be inaccurate to say group members in these practices are 'poor' in absolute terms. With some exceptions (Li et al., 2018), most of the literature on co-production in the Global South deals mainly with low-income groups, suggesting that co-production may be a way to attain what middle and higher-income groups achieve without this recourse. In the case of Oshakati, although the SDFN member may have herself be a low income earner, she may at the same time be part of an extended family network composed also of higher-income earners. This became evident at the point where land was attained, and individual households began to make improvements to the land and the house. In some cases, the improvements were gradual and modest, but in others, these were quick and thorough; if not luxurious in some cases (see Figure 49). This may be due to the property eventually becoming a 'family house' to a larger web of relatives, some of whom may receive higher incomes. On the other hand, while the areas where the practices started taking place may have been initially 'informal' or even 'outside' the LA (e.g. Oshakati), they have by now not only reached a point of being 'formal' but in some cases well located (e.g. Windhoek). This coincides with my criticism to Holston and Miraftab's propositions on insurgent citizenship and insurgent planning respectively, in that they assign such features to informal settlements and the poor (see 2.2.3 above). Although my work does not account fully for a transition from lower to middle-income, it does suggest that this possibility is very much there; therefore the

question that my work raises is: what happens when the constituencies in question face upward mobility and what happens when the spaces transition from 'informal' to 'formal'? Is 'the insurgent' only a transitory phase (to middle class)? At this point, many are by now *de facto* holding an asset (e.g. house, a plot of land) with an estimated value in the 'housing market' that would automatically place them in the upper end of the middle-class in the Namibian context. This is not to relativise the poverty that many experience in the everyday, but to stress how having a place of one's own helps to mobilise resources from an expanded web of social relations and 'fix' them into the land and the house, and/or to start extracting profit from the property through rent and other uses.



Figure 49 Photos of more developed houses in Kandjengedi South.

6.3.3. The pervasive influence of the policy-legal framework

The legal framework for spatial production had a strong influence on the practices, which at times impose arbitrary requirements or have undesirable effects. Although existing literature in co-production highlights the benefits of the process for the constituency involved, the effects that co-productive processes have at the city-wide or national scale do not emerge sufficiently. It is also not yet clear in the literature whether the term 'co-production' has reached any national or local government framework as such. In the case of Namibia, I have documented how some measures currently being implemented perpetuate inherited divisions; even if there is some co-productive process entailed. One example lies in the case of Gobabis, where Freedom Square was divided into several blocks to comply with FLT legislation. 'The block' approach to spatial organisation may make sense from the planning or land surveying point of view, but its adequacy as a social unit for association and cooperation is something that appears more arbitrary than carefully considered. Another example is how the power of the grassroots in leading the development of their living environment is constrained by regulations applying to urban areas at large. In the case of Gobabis, the inclusion of public infrastructure and some amenities was negotiable during the 'participatory' process, but not land use in general. While the location of churches or open space could be decided, whether to embed new uses (e.g. business) or densities in the residential plots at stake was not up for discussion, even though these were within green field sites outside the planning scheme. It is here that we can observe a crucial difference in the debates on co-production and *autogestion* in spatial production; while the former tends to the modernist in terms of having the delivery of a service as its objective, the literature on the latter deals with the provision of services and infrastructure as a political act of autonomy from the state and in some cases on 'free play'. The difference is not hard-edged, and it is necessary to recognise that co-productive practices can yield the necessary assets to enable the autonomy that is so much at the core of *autogestion*.

I find also important to highlight the issues at stake in spatial organisation and in attempting collective living in the context of urban areas in Namibia today, which bear the strong

modernist legacies of Apartheid. Planning regulations governing the sizes of blocks, plots, street widths, and other spatial aspects, are based on technical considerations related to infrastructure; more significantly, on *the circulation* of the private car⁴⁴. This refers to the modernist planning framework that had the automobile, not the pedestrian (let alone social interactions) as its key organising principle. Such technical considerations entrench fundamental spatial divisions in the structure of urban areas. Collectivisation in urban areas is a difficult task, not necessarily because of social apathy, but one has to consider the impact that the very infrastructure of the urban fabric and its administration has in embedding individualism in the social process in question. This goes beyond the individual plot as a basic unit, it actually goes underneath it (e.g. in water meters, sewerage lines) and above (e.g. electricity lines). This is complemented by individualised administration, which measures consumption individually, turning service provision into controlling devices, enabling the LA to take disciplinary action in case of lack of payment. The cases show that individual infrastructure can be administered collectively, as was the case for the water supply in the case of Dibasen. The groups paid the fee collectively and divided it in equal parts despite differential individual water consumption. This eventually proved to be problematic, not least due to the differential individual consumption, but rather to the lack of payment by certain members; a matter that could be arguably resolved through a social process but was instead defused by a technical fix. This level of collectivisation, which proved to be problematic in this case, may nevertheless be suitable at later stages or perhaps in other settings. This may also be used as evidence of the difficulties that collective efforts face in a built environment milieu that is heavily individualised from the onset.

The segregated nature of urban areas furthermore bears a strong legacy, which is not only visible spatially, but also in other aspects of everyday life. In the case of Gobabis, the architecture student reported presenting to inhabitants the possibility of living in a more central area in town instead of the north-eastern periphery that the pre-independence town planning scheme had set aside for 'natives'. Inhabitants, however, did not see a problem in living in this segregated condition, arguing that 'town' was 'just a 20-minute walk' away (see 5.3.16 above). To unpack the significance of this statement would require

⁴⁴ For instance, see the writings of Choay for modernism and city planning (1965, 1970); or Volger for the specific case of Namibia (1929).

further analysis beyond the scope of this study. However, it exemplifies the normalisation of segregation as a defining feature of life 'in town'. In the case of Oshakati, SDFN was allocated land in Kanjengedi South; however, the possibility of accessing more centrally-located areas in town did not feature in the discussions. As Castán Broto and Neves Alves note, literature on co-production is not always clear on whether co-productive practices actually challenge existing (and oppressive, segregating) urban structures (2018). In the case of Namibia, while they may not challenge the overall apartheid urban structures, they do challenge the centralised, statist and top-down ways that made them happen.

6.3.4. Spatial qualities: the generic as a base for equality

The spatial qualities of the neighbourhoods created by the practices are a kind of *existenz minimum* shaped by the legal framework in Namibia. As mentioned earlier, town planning is based on established standards such as road dimensions and minimum plot sizes, which shape the layout of the places in question, regardless of whether there was a participatory component entailed in the process. Similarly, in the two cases where houses have been built, the architecture was determined by a simple blueprint. In the case of Oshakati, the standard house that NHAG and SDFN have been developing since the 1990s, was utilised. It provides a basic dwelling to gain a foothold in 'the formal' but with possibilities for expansion and improvements (see Figure 51). In the case of Windhoek, because the group was able to compound BTP loans with their savings, houses were slightly larger than those typical of the BTP. For both the urban layout and the house, the main objective was to be able to comply with Municipal minimum standards and reduce costs as much as possible. Architecturally, this was achieved by limiting the use of windows and doors, excluding finishes, working with pre-fabricated elements, and reducing the number of rooms. However, while economy in the construction of houses was sought, planning layouts remain generally expensive because of their design as low-density neighbourhoods and lack of land use opportunities to generate local economies. In addition, the logic behind the layout of the plots of land in Namibia is likely to remain in place for decades to come. Except in the case of Gobabis (that was re-blocked) the layouts do not feature any outstanding spatial qualities and the possibilities for the neighbourhood improvements at a later stage are dim.

Therefore, while the house is conceived as a flexible and growing artefact, the planning layout remains the fixed backbone that shapes the built environment in the long term, without substantial room for transformation.



Figure 50 Photographs of a well-maintained house (left) and one house almost in its original state (right) in Dibasen.



Figure 51 Photographs of original houses developed in Kandjengedi South.

The ‘minimum dwelling’ in the cases of Oshakati and Windhoek displays a considerable level of transformation by the households. In the case of Windhoek, Dibasen was clear that ‘all houses must be equal’ at the onset; stressing the fact that no member should benefit more than others through the collective efforts of the group. Today, all houses are substantially different; partly reflecting the economic situation of the individual household, and partly reflecting the opportunity available for imbuing a particular house with care and creativity. In some cases, gardens have been established, trees have been planted, ornaments installed, houses painted, house numbers enhanced; in some others, security features have been installed, such as burglar bars in windows, metallic gates in front of entrance doors, fences, walls, barbed or razor wire. All of these are in addition to the occasional home

extensions, which vary from one room being added, to extensive increases rendering the original house invisible from the outside. Irrespective of whether this ‘creativity’ is minimal or otherwise, what may be relevant is the initial striving aim for an equal common ground through the collective process, allowing for individual appropriation at a later stage.

More than the particularities of spatiality that the cases I document reveal, this section raises a critical question: are there distinct spatial qualities to co-production? The question of distinct spatial characteristic to a socio-spatial process is one that a substantive body of literature asks about housing cooperatives or co-housing (to name a few, Blau, 1999; Vestbro & Horelli, 2012; LaFond & Tsvetkova, 2017); even for practices associated with *autogestion*, the spatial aspects find a place within the overall analysis (Cirugeda, 2014). However, there has not yet been much written on whether distinct spatial qualities emerge out of co-productive practices. My own work has suggested the challenges of collective living in an inherently individualised spatial production (see 6.3.1 above), which basically render the layouts and floor plans of co-productive practices almost identical to those places developed through top-down public projects or even commercially developed ones. Yet what can be said from the evidence I have gathered is that indeed it is generic spaces, applied uniformly to all beneficiaries, that appear to be associated with the equality that participants in the co-productive practices expect from such a process. Apart from this observation, the actual contribution from my work in this respect is the pending task of focusing on the spatial qualities of co-production.

6.4. Conclusion: a summary of claims and the limits of this study

6.4.1. Summary of claims

I have proposed a way to think in the abstract on the process as a way to deepen theoretical thinking on the practices. This is particularly useful for the debates on co-production in the production of space, which are comparatively more recent than the debates on *autogestion*, whose genealogies can be traced to debates on the state, capitalism and social movements since the mid-20th Century. I have shown how thinking on ‘the rhythms’ of the process

reveals the negotiations of imperatives that each stakeholder brings to the sequence when joining or exiting; the breaks and continuities within the sequence of events; whether alliances were forged and sustained; among many other aspects. I have also differentiated between the overall rhythms of the process and the ‘micro-rhythms’ of the everyday (e.g. weekly meetings for saving, house openings). Without going into too much detail, I have raised the importance of these rhythms as a way to think about collective spatial practices as a task of placing participants’ micro-rhythms in synchrony.

I have raised the question of whether it is possible to clarify what is *actually existing co-production* and what are simply isolated forms of cooperation. I have shown how the practices reveal a number of diverse strategies, which furthermore relate to several observations made in both the literature on co-production and *autogestion* (see Table 5). I have then written how co-productive practices may be composed of co-productive moments but not only such moments, and therefore how it is possible to differentiate between single co-productive moments and processes. While both may be regarded as co-productive practices, processes can be understood as *sequences* of events, co-productive or otherwise, sustained over a period of time.

I have pointed out the difference between structural asymmetries and those embedded in the processes. This raises the importance of having a truthful overview of the context when assessing co-productive practices which, as in the cases I discuss, is one of stark inequality and naturalised segregation. I have discussed how autonomy can be understood as a matter at stake between institutions, but also as an important and often ignored bone of contention between inhabitants vis-à-vis the collective grassroots association and processes. This puts in a different light the voluntary nature of the processes, which is often assumed. This is relevant because, as I discuss vis-à-vis recent literature, co-production has both the potential of enhancing or reducing structural inequities.

Using insights from the literature on *autogestion*, I have also shown how it is important to understand ‘the age of the practices’, as some characteristics that are not present at the time of analysis may emerge at a later stage, and vice versa. This in turns raises the issue of what is the ultimate aim, tacit or explicit, that each concept tacitly implies. For instance,

does *autogestion* reduce structural inequities? On the other hand, while *autogestion* is a concept that exists within a premise of the 'withering away of the state' (see 2.2.1 and 2.2.2 above), one can ask what is the *longue durée* scenario towards which co-production contributes to or works towards? To have decentralised development while assuming the continuous or permanent existence of the state? Does this render co-production as a medium-range line of thought (meso-theory)? Is co-production a slower mode of gradually decentralising power but only to a certain extent? Or is it possible to understand co-production as a moderate means to an (unstated) radical aim? The claim that crystallises from these questions is that literature on co-production, differently from that on *autogestion*, has not yet clearly stated which could be the longer term aims. This raises questions on contemporary theorising in the ways of producing space.

I have documented how, through these practices, newfound agencies have emerged; particularly among local authorities and professionals. This suggests that professional practice (whether in local government, academia or private sector) may be transitioning to a more socially-embedded kind of practice. This is furthermore relevant to point out since the model for professional engagement remains the 'formal' private sector, something that is becoming increasingly a minority domain in view of the extent of informal settlements in Namibia today. On the other hand, I have also noted a kind of fluidity between roles, which has allowed some participants a mobility that in turn has enabled them to acquire a broader view of the issues at stake in spatial production. This has arguably enhanced the capacity of mediation that can be expected among those participants in these practices, and hence the agency that I have mentioned earlier in this section. In this respect, I have also shown how a wider understanding of 'who co-owns' the process can represent an alternative to the question of 'who leads'.

I have also noted how legitimacy emerges as a strong value in the collective process. More than adherence to the law or to procedures, it is the *common understanding* of how things are done that allows for a collective to make judgements of what is acceptable and what is to be sanctioned, without this being necessarily written down. I have also questioned the notion of 'institutional co-production' by asking whether institutionality is in fact a strategy. Here, I have not only referred to establishing memoranda of understanding (MOUs), but

also contracts, letters, convening of meetings and ceremonies. I suggest that this unwritten institutionality may have escaped those seeking paper documents to be able to speak about institutional life. What I have also suggested is that there are ways to understand institutional life from a different vantage point than that of the bureaucratically 'formal'. I have also documented the power of these unwritten rules; an example is how, while they are theoretically only set to guide the actual collective process, they have considerable impact on everyday life, behaviour in public space, and sometimes even in private matters.

I have also proposed to reconsider the discussion on whether the state is weakening/reducing or strengthening/expanding, and instead to understand the kind of restructuring that both central and local governments are undergoing through partnering with the grassroots as an opportunity to reposition their role strategically. I have shown how roles traditionally attributed to the state are performed by different parties in these practices and how 'decentralisation' can therefore be understood beyond the devolution of powers from central to local government, but as a generalised power redistribution from the state to a wider array of stakeholders.

Ownership, even if only perceived, has been an important aspect in the practices. This has in some cases allowed for the construction of houses in an almost indistinct way as in 'formal' areas, even though the *de jure* ownership of inhabitants has remained uncertain. The practices also show how the tenure of the land changes in the eye of the beholder, and how some stakeholders have managed to bring themselves to a new vantage point of land tenure in favour of those inhabiting the space.

There was very little evidence of 'free play' that is arguably a defining aspect of *autogestion*; although this may be due to the methods through which the research was conducted. However, at least in two cases there were signs of a kind of 'social exhaustion' among participants with regards to the collective processes. I have not been able to document leisure activities other than those inherent to the process, such as ceremonies with officials or hand-out of certificates, which raises questions on whether the practices are in fact purely utilitarian in nature. The collective process has nevertheless relativised an otherwise absolute control over the property that owners have over the land and all that is contained

in it within Namibia's legal framework. In the cases I have documented, there is a generalised understanding that the land is communally owned, and that individual households can only make claims over the improvements on the land.

I have noted how spatial aspects at the city, neighbourhood and household scale play a comparatively small role in the narratives. The practices have not challenged the inherited segregated socio-spatial structures of the places where they have taken place, although they have significantly changed *the ways* of spatial production. While inhabitants do not seem to imagine the possibility of a fundamentally transformed spatial reality (e.g. accessing an affordable piece of land within a centrally-located area), the grassroots have started to take action and decision in the way planning is undertaken; at least to a certain degree. At the household level, generic spatial qualities are associated with equal beneficiation from the collective process, which is an observation that can be used to discuss whether there are distinct spatial characteristics to 'co-production'.

6.4.2. The limits of this thesis

The major limitation of my study relates to the depth and breadth that the individual doctoral research allowed for vis-à-vis the scale of the three cases (see 9.1 below). While I was able to cover three practices in three local authorities, I was not able to delve further into the inner workings of the saving groups or the scale of the individual household. Hence, some matters that may be evident from zooming in may have gone unnoticed from the vantage point I have offered.

Similarly, I have only included the events that the participants I have engaged regarded worth accounting for. However, more ordinary matters ('micro-rhythms', see 6.1.2 above), may have escaped the interviews. This is despite the fact that some interviewees were engaged on several occasions.

I have not delved much into the aspects of co-production of knowledge and teaching, which I could have done by engaging further the colleagues at the university and the students that

took part in these processes. This would be congruent if one understands the process of co-producing services as part of the process of 'learning by doing' for everyone involved. However, the experiences in Gobabis were very recent and it may take some time for the effects of this teaching modality at the university in relation to other classroom-based experiences.

Another limitation is that I collected all the data in a period of two years, therefore allowing me only to account for the past and the present as it was reported to me by the interviewees; and through verifying some claims with additional documents. There would be valuable insights to be gained in a longitudinal study, accounting for the way in which the places, inhabitants and other institutions evolve with time. Such study would arguably place less emphasis on the access to the land and the production of housing, and more on the transactions of the assets or their transformation (e.g. structural additions, land use changes). This point in particular, is a crucial matter which I raise in the section dealing with openings for future research (see 7.6 below).

7. Conclusion

In this section I address the research questions of my thesis and provide a summary of its theoretical contributions. Firstly, I start with a summary of the objectives of my research and reflect on the methods I have employed. I then make a synthesis of the three cases, explaining how each practice undertook socio-spatial production, while highlighting the role of those involved. In the next section I address the way in which participants related to one another, with a special focus on the bottom-up role that the grassroots performed and how this speaks to the debates on co-production and *autogestion*. In the third section I situate the practices within the historical trajectories that I outlined in the Background section (see Chapter 4 above). I conclude with a section highlighting the theoretical contributions of my thesis.

7.1. Summary of objectives and methods

The key objective of my research has been to account on the land and housing practices that produce space in Namibia today. I have done this through extensive documentation of three cases in different urban areas. I have engaged with a wide array of participants through semi-structured in-depth interviews, and triangulated their accounts with documents such as maps, title deeds, council meeting minutes, and others. I have turned these accounts into narratives, which I include fully in section 5 above as well as in visualisations in a way that allows analysis in the abstract (see 6.1.2 above and 9.2 below).

The second objective was to account for the grassroots process in a greater detail than the overall process. In matters of scale, this was more successful in the Windhoek case, as the other two cases were much larger in nature. Here, it was possible to account in detail on the ways of transacting and negotiating space, as well as on the everyday life to a limited degree. This account can also be found mainly in section 5 above, with further analysis in 6 above.

The third objective was to account for how the various parties related to one another. In this case, I proposed using as a framework two concepts that, while related, stem from different epistemologies: co-production and *autogestion*. In 6 above, I have discussed the concepts of co-production and *autogestion* through the evidence I gathered, discussing the applicability of certain readings of these to the cases I documented, and made a number of claims that I synthesise in this section.

Finally, the fourth objective was to situate the cases within both the socio-spatial trajectories of Namibia as well as within on-going and long-standing debates on housing and land. I have outlined the field regarding this in 4 above, and analysed the aspects pertaining to land and housing debates in 6.3 above, and to matters regarding the historical trajectories in 7.4 below.

The following sections expand on the results of these four objectives in a logically synthetic way.

To conclude this section, I provide a short reflection on the methodology.

Structuring my research using case studies helped me to account for ‘what happened’ in the practices. A degree of diversity in methods was required to account for relatively similar processes that were very different in nature and scale. In terms of the methods I chose, detail was required in order to analyse the processes and to trace as many iterations as possible; I have noted only a few qualifications regarding each event (see 9.2 below). The method, of engaging in long, semi-structured interviews and reaching out to the widest array of participants possible, allowed me to be able to present various versions and capture different stories of the same process. The reader may find that although one viewpoint may prevail (e.g. in Windhoek, that of the group leader; in Gobabis that of the NGO; and in Oshakati, that of the Federation), other viewpoints were also represented. I strived to present diverging accounts, as it was not my purpose to ‘reconcile’ them through this work. In some cases, this did yield some findings, as the diverging accounts revealed asymmetries in knowledge. I believe that this layered and multi-focal account is a contribution of my work.

This methodology however made it difficult to be conclusive or to provide normative statements. This is in line with what scholars specialising in case study and process analysis argue: “not all good process tracing is conclusive” (Bennett & Checkel, 2014:30-31). Furthermore, I have sought to present *relatable*, not ‘generalisable’, cases that can be linked to other practices elsewhere in terms of geography or time. This opens up the possibility for my work to relate beyond micro and meso theorisation, which I have sought to do in the section below. I therefore conclude that organising my research through case study was useful in accounting for ‘the how’ and in highlighting a number of emerging issues for future research (see 7.6 below). It was less suitable for analysing ‘the why’, which was nevertheless beyond the objectives of my research. In conclusion, my overall aim in engaging through these methods was to contribute to the larger question of ‘what is to be done’ by asking ‘how is it being done’.

7.2. The ways of the process: a synthesis of the practices

In this section, I address the research question of how do land and housing practices produce space in Namibia today?

My interest was in accounting for the production of space beyond the statutory discourse and the narratives contained in official plans. I have outlined different kinds of co-production to distinguish between the different situations that took place within the practices (see 2.2.1 above). I am not interested in measuring how ‘effective’ were the relations within the process⁴⁵ nor in auditing the outcomes⁴⁶. The reader may nevertheless discern which parties were more accessible, forthcoming, and enabling; and which were more adamant or obstructive. In many of the cases, parties ‘met each other half way’. I have also provided documentation (e.g. photographs, maps, and other visuals) so that the reader can get an idea of the material spatial aspects of each practice.

⁴⁵ This could have been achieved by, e.g. measuring satisfaction through a Likert-scale prompt asking every actor to qualify the experience with each other and/or with the results, etc.

⁴⁶ This could have been achieved by, e.g. tracking the changes to the structures, calculating investment on the land, enumerating beneficiaries and qualifying the impact on their children, etc.

The case of Windhoek was one where the grassroots triggered and led the process, particularly the leadership of the group. Central government came in only at the later stage, and although it did so in a manner that was beneficial for the group, it was in a rather extraordinary way; i.e. mobilising top structures for support. The need for individualisation of tenure was not merely an option that the group sought for their own benefit, but a need arising from the fact that contemporary spatial production is inherently individualised and, without individual ownership, services and other transactions become particularly burdensome. The relationship between the group and local government was one of both solidarity and co-production (as was the case where the municipal planner and the municipal community worker were involved, see 5.1.3 above) and also one of bureaucracy and challenge (as was the case when the traffic engineers or the councillors were involved, see 5.1.12 above). The *kind* of relationships that were established often created moments of innovation and solidarity. In some cases, the innovations triggered within the LA remained for the benefit of other groups. On the other hand, professionals played a mediating role between parties, and their role was not fixed but fluid as they would themselves ‘change hats’ or change institutions; however, further work focused specifically on these mediators is needed to unpack the nature of their contribution. Some, while based at one institution (e.g. LA or university), at times performed beyond their official roles (e.g. helping out after hours or beyond their work description). University lecturers helped with undertaking a service that would otherwise be commercially recompensed, and in some cases they ‘brought back’ the lessons of the practices to the classroom. Some professionals played a ‘hands-off’ role and delivered a conventional service at their prescribed fee. These engaged professionals also *mediated* between the LA and the group, and sometimes between central government, the LA *and* the group. The private sector played an important role, but invariably through corporate social responsibility (CSR). The group at times resorted to contractors, purchased materials in bulk, and in the case of Windhoek, even ‘commissioned’ planners, conveyancers and surveyors to draft the individual titles. In short, this practice attained access to land and housing through partnership with a wide array of stakeholders, banking heavily on the collective process and the reputational advantage that they have built over the years.

In the case of Oshakati the practice relied on the relationship between the LA and the Federation and their support NGO, and eventually on the relationship between the Federation and the traditional land owner; central government had little (if any) input. What is particular about this practice is how the Federation coordinator played a significant role in mediating and arguably leading the process. What was also particular in this case was the interaction between the traditional land owner and the group, which was more about mutual respect than collaboration. Through this, each party was able to make a compromise, and reach *substantive agreement* (i.e. giving up a portion of their land). This case was, therefore, not one of 'shoulder to shoulder' cooperation (see 'informal demarcation' exercise in 5.1.3 above), but rather of coordination, delegation, and service-provision. In short, this practice attained access to land and housing through a collective process of saving and engagement primarily with the local authority (LA) negotiating with the traditional landowner, and with the assistance from the support NGO and the Federation.

The case of Gobabis was shaped by opportunities that arose at different times. These came from many sides, each party bringing its contributions but also its own imperative. Central government remained observant, and when the process had reached its later stages and the funds became available (and after years of consistent engagement between the Ministry and the NGO and Federation), it was able to make a substantial amount available that helped to fund the installation of services. The case of Gobabis may potentially benefit from the rolling out of the FLT pilot, carried out by the Ministry of Land Reform; but currently, other initiatives are filling the vacuum in land rights that is left by the time it is taking in waiting for this to take place (see 5.3.12 above). The LA has been generally supportive, but as in the other examples, this is subject to the situation and the official in question. This was, therefore, a case characterised by contingencies, kept afloat by the commitment of the NGO, the grassroots, and to an extent, the LA. What is also particular about this case is the role that the international space played; this is in terms of the decisions that were taken abroad, the participants who came from another country, or the local participants who were able to travel abroad through a learning exchange. It is also in this case where the university plays its more decisive role, and where students have thereafter followed independently to support this process. Here, private contractors would be hired to teach

skills, instead of simply undertaking the job. In short, this practice attained land and housing through a variety of processes that entailed self-enumeration, re-blocking, participatory planning studios, and other opportunities that arose through the years. This practice profited from support from a wide variety of stakeholders, particularly a sustained partnership with the LA, considerable assistance from the support NGO and its international network, as well as from central government.

7.3. Ways of co-producing, and the possibility of *autogestion*

In this section, I address the research questions of ‘how do inhabitants and the grassroots go about the social processes of spatial production’ and ‘how do participants relate to one another within the practices’.

In short, the groups have undertaken the process collectively, and participants have related to one another in a co-productive way. As suggested earlier, these practices embody a recent or emerging kind of co-production. This takes place in socio-spatial production, not necessarily with respect to planning only, but also in other kinds of endeavours in the production of space: surveying, building infrastructure, urban design, and learning about urban development in general, just to name a few. In such socio-spatial production, it is almost an assumption that those triggering the process can be either a grassroots group, the state (local or central government), but also in some cases the support NGO. The duality between the state and civil society blurs and becomes increasingly complex, allowing room for independent professionals, university lecturers, students, and the private sector to form part of the constellation (see Figure 52). Co-production then takes place within segments of the constellation, while it is possible that at the same time some other segments become active in a way that can be otherwise be frankly called service delivery or ‘normal bureaucracy’. The faculties of the state are not necessarily challenged, but they are called upon when required and can be demanded through negotiation. In this way, the processes can be said to emerge both due to the absence (i.e. in terms of implementation and tangible improvements on everyday life) but also the perceived presence (i.e. policies, regulations) of the state. Mediators are fundamental to co-production, and they are not only a hinge

between the state and civil society, but also between other parties. More importantly, mediation is not necessarily the attribute of one participant (e.g. the professional) but can be found in members of other institutions involved (e.g. local government, universities).

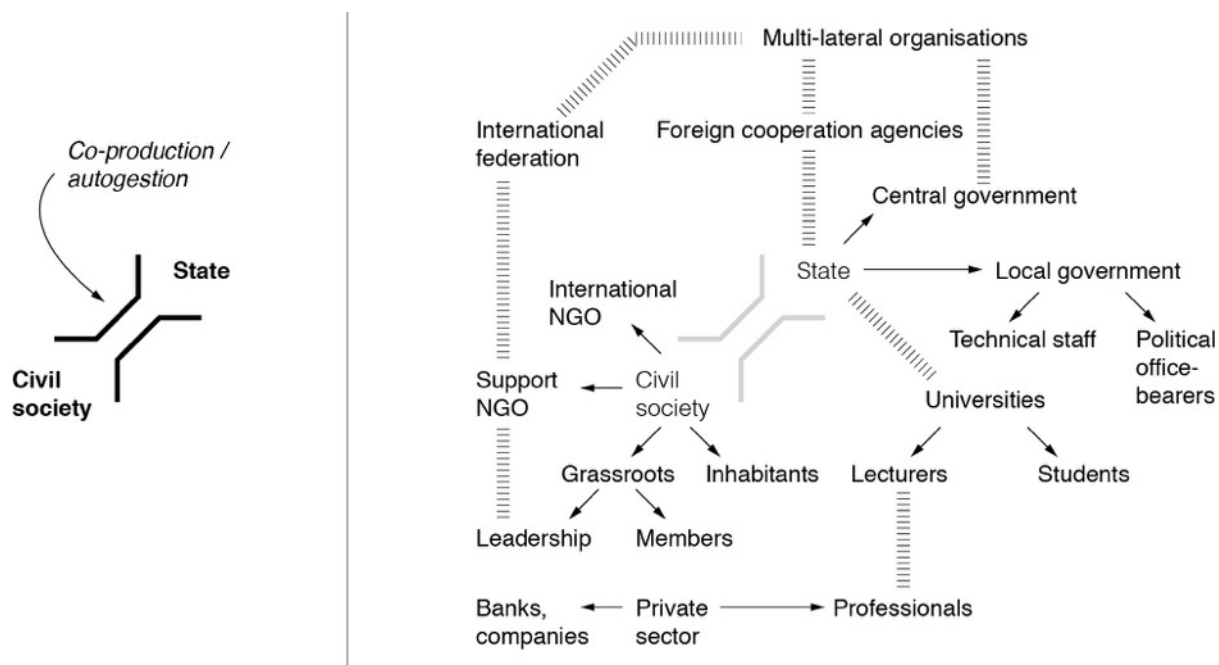


Figure 52 The state-civil society duality (left), and the actually existing reality of 'the constellation' that participants in the practices form (right).

Issues of power continue to be at stake as they always have been as outlined in the literature. The cases have shown that local state configurations vary widely throughout contexts and furthermore depend on who within the institution is taking part. Based on the cases I present, the chief characteristic of the state is not necessarily that it is strong, weak, or autocratic, but that it is somewhat decentralised and permeable; and that there is an open door to it in some way. The practices profited from a longer history of 'state-civil society' relations in socio-spatial development (see 4.2); which may have contributed to central and local government to have an 'open door'. Invariably, it is only the state that remains able to disburse the large amounts required for bulk infrastructure; therefore it retains a distinct role in the co-production equation in socio-spatial production. However, the state no longer holds the monopoly over the issue of tenure, since LAs are able to issue certificates of tenure. The general aim of co-production is not merely efficiency, but in some cases empowerment; in some other cases, it strives specifically for self-determination and to have some degree of say in the way matters take place. This is not just to 'take matters into one's

own hand' but to extend 'decentralisation' not merely as an act from central to local government, but also from these two levels of government to grassroots processes that have attained legitimacy as a reliable partner through co-productive processes. In this way, the longer-term objective is not merely 'to participate' or to 'gain visibility', but to propose through example new ways of co-governing urban areas. This is done through negotiation and, based on the sheer fact that spatial production it is contentious, discussions on political issues continue (and, possibly, increase). This is fundamental because for one party to claim a power vested on another requires a political act, as seen in Bourdieu's conceptualisation of centre/periphery in reference to the central and local state. This small but significant step is in the direction of Lefebvrian tenets on *autogestion*, but at times remains incompatible, as the role of the state remains a given even in cases where it has been, for all practical purposes, rather absent; but at the same time, at least at the level of perception, ubiquitous.

What I refer to as the more recent cases of co-production (see 2.2.1), help to locate the practices I document in the debates. One of the cases I document (i.e. Windhoek), is not anymore based only on the experiences of the big federations of the urban poor in the Global South, but on smaller practices trying to make it also possible to co-produce without the infrastructure and resources of these entities (e.g. international exchanges, revolving funds) or at least supplementing these with other resources available to the urban poor (e.g. in the cases of Windhoek and Oshakati, access to the Build Together Programme). Other case (i.e. Gobabis) demonstrates the wide array of disciplines and entities involved in the process and how the events can be seen as a form of co-government, as key decisions hitherto only taken by the authority are not taken through a partnership with inhabitants. The membership of the SDFN regional coordinator in the 'land committee' in Oshakati could also be considered as evidence of this. However, based on this evidence, one can say that the boundaries between early, later and recent forms of co-production (see Table 1) are not hard-edged and may well coexist. Although it may be too early to differentiate between the later and the recent examples, a transition can be observed.

I also argue that it is in these recent conceptualisations of co-production that I formulate that overlaps with certain interpretation of *autogestion*. This is not necessarily the Lefebvrian tenets of the 1960s or the way in which critical urban theorists account for them in recent writings, but rather to the way in which Ortiz and Zárate employ the term when accounting for the cases of the Habitat International Coalition. Since the latter is a more inductive understanding of *autogestion* stemming from a wide array of popular practices largely from the Global South, I refer to them as *popular understandings of autogestion*. A main attribute of the popular understanding of autogestion is the acknowledgment of ‘the age’ of the practice, referring to the stages in which a process may be situated. This allows ‘a gradient’ of *autogestion* that does not seem to find a place in Lefebvre’s propositions, as he states how *autogestion* is rather incompatible with a state apparatus and with the suggestion of inhabitants being accorded only ‘a share’. The concept of Lefebvre emerges here as *a critique*, rather than as an operational concept in the way that the popular understanding of *autogestion* attempts to be. It is also important to note here that while in all writings on *autogestion* an ultimate aim is outlined, co-production differs in that the final goal of co-production is not clearly spelled out in the literature; while the former seems to be both a means and an end, the latter is approached invariably as a means.

7.4. Situating the practices within the historical perspective

In this section, I address the research question of ‘how can the practices I document be situated in the socio-spatial trajectories in Namibia and in the land and housing debates’. To do this, I bring together some of the experiences of the cases with the historical trajectories outlined above (see Background).

The practices I document can be considered the ‘third generation’ of grassroots practices with regards to spatial production in Namibia. The first one can be said to be the largely undocumented ‘*de facto* self-help’ housing processes which took place throughout the colonial regime. This echoes the observations of Parnell and Hart in South Africa (see 2.3.2 above) and refers to the situations where the regime facilitated land for settlement of low-

income ‘African’ groups required to work within urban areas. The second stage can be said to have emerged in the 1980s and early 1990s, after greater freedom of movement allowed considerable influx to urban areas, and groups such as the early Saamstaan started to emerge with the assistance of charitable groups, professionals with agency, and other participants. The novelty of working with organised communities of low-income groups which were managing funds, and finding security of tenure in urban areas, defined the workings of these early attempts. It is also here that we can locate foreign-induced and supported interventions that attempted to import a mode of ‘participatory’ engagement in socio-spatial production (e.g. the Oshakati Human Settlements Improvement Project [OHSIP]). These practices were not short of novelty, as in every case there were new challenges, innovations, and strategies that took place. Most significantly, at least in the cases of Oshakati and Gobabis, was access to a national Federation and an international support network. However, the case of Oshakati could also benefit the description of the ‘second generation’, as it includes less participants and a more limited set of aims than those in the ‘third’ one. The significance of this is to demonstrate how these two last generations can coexist with each other.

Table 7 Stages of bottom-up socio-spatial development in Namibia

	First generation	Second generation	Third generation
Date	Colonial period	From 1980s, 90s	2000s
Modality	<i>De facto</i> self-help	Early co-production	Later/recent co-production
Aim	Basic shelter	Access to secure tenure and housing in urban area	Access to secure tenure and housing in urban areas and co-production/self-management
Participants	Inhabitants and local government	Inhabitants, grassroots, professionals, support NGO, local government, central government, foreign donors	Inhabitants, grassroots, federation, support NGO, local government, central government, foreign donors, international networks, professionals, universities, private sector
Examples	Old Location (Windhoek)	Saamstaan (Windhoek); OHSIP (Oshakati); Kandjengedi South (Oshakati).	Dibasen (Windhoek); Freedom Square and city-wide upgrading efforts (Gobabis)

Although the legal framework in Namibia is strong, and spatial production professionalised and standards-oriented, we see how the overall legal framework became negotiated at the

ground level. The case of Oshakati illustrates how inhabitants tried to make sense of this at the ground level. Negotiations at the periphery of the urban and the customary realms were taken on by the inhabitants of the place itself, rather than mediated by the LA or taken to the relevant arbitration process. The overall national legal framework based on the Roman-Dutch law principles that tend to make no differentiation on the ownership of the house and the ownership of the land, was also relativised in the cases I documented, specifically those of Oshakati and Windhoek, where the grassroots process made clear differentiation between the ownership of the house and the land.

Local government inherited a segregated urban area, not only spatially and in terms of opportunities, but also with regard to access to information. City plans, in the case of Gobabis and Oshakati, held relatively little currency, although both LAs had them in place (drafted by well-known private firms). In some cases (Gobabis) the case study area fell outside the plans, and although some innovation might have been in order, some observed how the newly developed settlements merely continued the patterns of these plans, when clearly the need indicated otherwise (e.g. in terms of land use, densities, urban form). Thus LAs find themselves at a crossroads between staying with the statutory and negotiating the regulations for the sake of those whose compliance with them is out of reach. However, adaptation to local needs, which can be deemed as innovation, is indeed taking place; and this is a kind of decentralisation where local government asserts its right to govern the area under its jurisdiction.

Crucial to these new equations is the role of professionals, partly because many were fundamental in mediating both the bottom-up process and the top-bottom 'formal'. This is not merely conjunctural, but I would argue related to the recent emergence of locally-trained graduates (e.g. planners, architects) and the agency of those already performing professionally and who realise the limits of their scope within current constraints. Universities are also actively reflecting on how to address the actual socio-spatial reality, and students are mobilising through independent initiatives to support bottom-up processes and projects in smaller LAs. In the case of Namibia this needs mention, as a decade ago some socio-spatial professions had to study overseas, rendering the current

professional class predominantly 'white', generally from a privileged background, and who had undergone their professional experience with mainly foreign references (Lühl, 2018).

It is important to bear in mind that these practices take place in the context of an acute land and housing crisis (see 4.1.4 above); one that has furthermore been shaped by distinctively negative historical connotations regarding 'the urban' that the oppressive Apartheid spatial order engendered in the minds of the majority of the population. Therefore, one can understand how some insurmountable challenges were overcome not merely due to the tenacity of the group leader or the commitment of few members, but also due to the strong motivation that the few opportunities to access urban land available today created in those who have had the rare chance of access to secure tenure. This is accompanied by a crisis in employment, which puts into context how necessary are the assets of land and housing to be able to mobilise the benefits of living in an urban area. It is also interesting to note how despite the fact that in some cases, such as Windhoek or to a certain degree Oshakati, beneficiaries are virtually in a position of homeowners, and irrespective of the significant value that the property now has because of real estate value increases, many are focused on how to engage in an economic activity rather than speculating on their property's value. Also relevant to note is how, from the different government programmes that have been implemented, it is only Build Together that has had any relevance for the three cases. Matters that often occupy the headlines in the local media (e.g. Mass Housing, challenges of radical youth groups, or the Second National Land Conference) appear here to be distant events taking place elsewhere in the country.

Contrary to the statements of the 'weakness' or 'fragmentation' of social organisations in Namibia, the progress made in these cases provides new evidence challenging prevalent perspectives on this. The historical legislation that banned association in Namibia is perhaps still recent; less than three decades ago, social organisation was perceived as a challenge to the central government, and therefore something dangerous and ultimately forbidden. Also an historical specificity is how 'self-help', 'self-government', 'community consultation', or 'alternative housing' were part of the narrative of the Apartheid administration, and hence also something to bear in mind when reading about the social acceptance of options that resemble or echo these in the minds of those who are old enough to remember (many of

them in positions of power). It is unclear how current practices benefit from precedents such as OHSIP, or the donor-funded projects in the early 1990s. This is unlikely, if only for the fact that the effects of these projects have not been documented or their ways revisited. What can be said, is that this way of socio-spatial production, while resembling somehow the iterations before and after independence, may need to be looked at with fresh eyes.

7.5. Theoretical propositions

The poststructuralist framework I have employed proved useful to allow for the three processes to reveal their own patterns without an *a priori* drive to generate typologies, comparatives, or normative statements. Under this framework, practices were understood not merely as ‘the acting-out of roles’ or ‘the playing of scores’ as Bourdieu would warn (see 2.1.1 above), but produced roles that were constantly changing, moving around, and being negotiated. Under this framework, I was able to move away from a purely utilitarian objective that a modernist type of study would aim to obtain. The material aspects were not completely disregarded but they were dealt with only as a component of a process that had as its main foci the social relations and interaction among participants. Outputs were nevertheless delivered (e.g. pipes were installed, plots of land were surveyed), and while these needed to be accounted for, it was important for me to ask ‘what else?’ This is what I would call *the meta knowledge*, that which is drawn not necessarily from the material achievements of the process, not even the social relations *per se*, but rather the conversations that can be had based on these three cases with regards to *the nature of the socio-spatial practices*. One section that dealt with this in particular is the one accounting for ‘the rhythms of co-production’ (see 6.1.2 above). These were seen in the frequency, delay or acceleration of actions; in the crossing of geographical scales; in the participation of one, two or more parties at different stages of the process; or in identifying whether the practices facilitated or impeded the objective sought by the steering party. In short, the post-structuralist framework does not here mean ‘no structure’, but rather allows for ‘a suspension’ of predetermined (older) structures to give room to ‘other’, arguably new, *kinds* of structures to emerge and display their characteristics, attributes, and pathways.

The key theoretical contributions are to the debates on co-production and *autogestion*. I have observed three stages in the development of co-production (see Table 1), and argued that the practices documented could be understood as ‘recent’ co-production. These bear a lot of similarities to the later forms of co-production, but do not necessarily fit exactly the descriptions of the authors who defined this second ‘wave’ of co-production. Here, ‘bringing parties together’ appears merely as a stage in a sequence of engagements leading to *substantive agreement*, some form of joint output, and/or compromise. I also argued that, from the different understandings of *autogestion*, the practices I documented are closer to what I would call *popular understandings of autogestion*, which I furthermore note as having some overlap with the recent understandings of co-production. One crucial consideration that the proponents of *autogestion* write about is the ‘age’ of the practice, which in the case of Namibia, with its relatively recent history of bottom-up collective urban practices (see 4.2 above), as well as an equally recent history of local government (see 4.1.2 above), can be said to be in its beginnings. This also raises the question of what is the ultimate aim of co-production vis-à-vis the clear premise of the ‘withering away of the state’ that the concept of *autogestion* contains. While *autogestion* seems to emphasise one party ‘doing things by itself’, which may be antithetical to co-production, it appears useful to keep it as a critical reference in sight. In this way, it is possible to imagine a medium or long-term situation where inhabitants indeed take the decisive lead in transforming space, exercise their right to the city, turning everyday life into their own making (*oeuvre*). However, for now, sustaining co-productive processes may be the task at hand.

I have proposed to understand *co-productive processes* as those situations where there is substantive agreement and where engagement is maintained over a sustained period of time; not merely some loose or once-off kind of collaboration, which in turn may nevertheless eventually become part of a co-productive process. I have then proposed to view both moments and processes as co-productive practices. I have proposed organising the literature on co-production in three stages: early, later, and recent (see Table 1); it is in this latter stage that I propose to situate the cases I present. I have also argued for the need for abstract thinking on co-production in order to deepen theorisation around it, particularly in views of its relatively short genealogy. I have then raised a number of questions that

emerge when interrogating the longer-term aim of co-production. While both the aim and underlying assumption of *autogestion* are that of the 'withering away of the state', the same is not as clearly spelled out about co-production in the existing literature. I have found the usefulness of the term *autogestion* for the cases I document when understood in an inductive way from popular practice as Ortiz and Zárate do; these are what I term *popular understandings of autogestion*. The Lefebvrian and other contemporary critical urban theorists' understandings of *autogestion* render the concept as a critique, which in the cases I have documented, appears more useful to have as a reference than to operationalise.

I have argued for the need to transition from thinking about state and civil society relations as a 'duality' to identifying 'constellations'. With such a wide and multifaceted field, one can have concurrent activities taking place; some of them 'co-productive', but not necessarily. It is these other 'new' participants who may be the new recipients within a broader process of state decentralisation. For the specific case of Namibia, I have proposed to organise bottom-up socio-spatial practices in three stages: first, second and third generation (see Table 7). It is in this latter stage that I situate the practices I document. One of the main hinges links between the second and third generations may indeed be these new participants in the production of space: universities, professionals and officials from local authorities with their increased agency. The mediating role that emerges and the fluidity when transitioning roles provide a conducive environment for grassroots processes to experience a broader 'totality' and to participate in it. From the side of the state, it enables a broader degree of acceptance to work with the 'messiness' of social processes, even when the grassroots may strive for or have a degree of institutionality. Finally, in this respect, I have argued that the discussion on the role of the state needs to transition from concerns on whether it is expanding/reducing to a different approach where analysis focuses on its restructurings in order to steer the strategic repositioning of its role.

Finally, my research suggests that the writings arguing for the primacy of land rights over and above title present a more accurate understanding of tenure security for the particular case of Namibia. I have shown how ownership, even if perceived, remains a powerful factor for association and a driver for the improvement of living conditions. My research also shows the possibilities of collective ownership, and provided examples of situations where

this has been supported by both collective processes and technical fixes. The power of social processes to change perceptions of statutory ownership and have concrete material outcomes on the ground, is also a powerful example that my research contributes to the literature on land rights. With regards to housing, the practices I document show how the production of housing is a strong means of organising, mobilising funds, and attaining partnership between the grassroots and local government. I have shown the inherent difficulties of collectivisation not only because of the legal and planning framework, but also because of the individualised structures and administration of urban areas. The three cases may in fact inadvertently suggest a progression in scale coinciding loosely with the literature on housing that I have outlined: from the development of fifty houses by one housing group (Windhoek), to several groups developing an entire extension together (Oshakati), and finally undertaking ‘city-wide planning’ through a partnership approach by encompassing the entire informal settlements of one town as one project (Gobabis).

7.6. Openings for future research

There is currently no research revisiting ‘participatory’ or ‘self-help’ housing projects in the 1990s (see 4.2.3 and 4.2.4 above), which may shed light on what has been their impact after decades. This, in turn, could be useful background information when dealing with public and foreign-supported processes in the production of space. Little is known about existing organisations endeavouring to access land and housing in urban areas; how they come to exist, what is their social composition, what is the ‘life expectancy’ of the group, in short: how do they go about their collective process. It is also not clear which deliberative mechanism seems to be the most frequently used, as there is no research documenting the adequacy of consensus or democratic majority, or that of individual or collective (e.g. committee) leadership. Documenting inter-group relationships is also a missing task; even with SDFN-affiliated groups, whose interaction is supported, the everyday life of groups and how they interact is not laid out in detail in their documentation. Assuming social organisation is a characteristic in the rolling out of public programmes and services, questions remain about how the ways of inhabitants and the grassroots will actually take

place and be supported. Importantly, documenting the 'collective life' beyond the utilitarian needs of the housing group is also a relevant outstanding task.

Research on how parties relate to each other and how they conduct themselves is a vast area for further research. More exploration is required to identify the openings that exist for professionals to structurally transform their regulatory space in order to make their contribution to social processes part of their mandate, and not merely a moral obligation. A review on the way in which LAs engage with their inhabitants, particularly low-income groups in need of accessing land and housing, may provide evidence on the kinds of tools that LAs today require in a context of a democratic dispensation and decentralisation.

Grassroots action inducing innovation in LAs is also an opening that my research suggests; documenting and tracking this will also be a valuable task. An audit of the actual expenditure of the state in socio-spatial development and, more pressingly, in supporting lower-income groups, is also an outstanding task. Clarity about the possibility of sustained co-production (or whether this will remain something left to the occasional availability of sympathetic or eager individuals) will only be possible once more research is undertaken on this topic. There is also a question regarding which fields actually require co-production and which ones simply require decisive action from one side. There are also open questions on the role of the private sector in the low-income socio-spatial realm. While the cases show how financial institutions are reaching out to the land and housing plight of the lowest income groups (see 5.1.12 above), it is invariably through charity that they take part. Finally, in terms of roles, a worthwhile task would be to document the other entities that have a role in socio-spatial processes, e.g. police, churches, teachers. In terms of housing, the role that landlords and tenants play also requires a closer look. While in some cases the landlords indeed rent their property and live elsewhere, in other cases they are virtually housemates with their tenants. The nature of these roles may open new possibilities of categories taken for granted in other contexts, such as that of 'collective housing'.

The way in which the existing institutional and legal framework support grassroots processes and interaction among parties involved in socio-spatial production, also requires further attention. Furthermore there is the need for studies documenting the impact of

tenure regularisation in Namibia. This may be possible in the event that members at Dibasen attain individual title. Exploring the actual legal and institutional framework in the context of a growing informal sector in terms of settlements and economies is a necessary task.

The spatiality of contemporary Namibia is also a topic requiring a contemporary update. A portrait or 'atlas' of Namibia's territory from an urban perspective would give relevant insights, as it is unclear whether the urbanisation pressures are being matched with infrastructural progress in terms of water provision, electricity supply, etc. The segregated spatial legacies, the transformation (growth/shrinkage) of urban areas, and the way in which their development has taken place, is also an outstanding task.

One omission in my study is the role of new technologies in supporting the socio-spatial processes on the ground. While most of those interviewed were actively using their mobile phones, as far as my research documents, this was only for communication and not, for example, for transacting money or exchanging digital documentation. The vulnerability of cash transactions documented in the cases (i.e. misuse of funds) suggests a potentially valuable contribution of technologies allowing cashless transactions. The relevance of new technologies in situations of conflict of boundaries when the borders are not made of durable materials can also be an area for future investigation.

Finally, I have documented socio-spatial processes that focus on access to land and housing in urban areas; it would be a worthwhile task to document the kinds of organising that exist in other fields. Not only organised labour (e.g. unions) but which kinds of collectivity are found in schools and universities, in the health sector, in demands for access to information, gender and sexual diversity struggles, in arts and the cultural production field. This will present a more thorough understanding on whether the practices I document sit within a larger process of collectivisation of wider co-production; or, perhaps, the possibility of eventual *autogestion*.

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9. ANNEXURES

Annexure 1: Matrix of cases

Annexure 2: Process analysis visuals

Annexure 3: Guideline for interviews

Annexure 4: Information sheet and consent form

Annexure 5: Policy and legal framework for Namibia's spatial production

Annexure 6: Section from the Flexible Land Tenure Act 4 of 2012 pertaining the formation of associations

Annexure 7: Fragments from City of Windhoek Council Resolution 416/11/2012










9.1. Annexure 1: Matrix of cases

	Windhoek	Oshakati	Gobabis
Case	Dibasen Homeless Committee of Katutura	SDFN Block in Kandjengedi South	Freedom Square (within City-Wide Planning process)
Population	50 households	150 households	3,300 households
Area	1.4 ha.	7.8 ha.	71 ha. (210 ha. all)
Tenure (<i>de jure</i>)	Two block erven registered at the Deeds Office under the Dibasen Homeless Committee of Katutura	Municipal land, not proclaimed	Municipal land, not proclaimed
Tenure (<i>de facto</i>)	Each block erf is subdivided into 25 individual blocks; inhabitants have built rental structures and, in some cases, have sold and inherited the house and the land.	The plot has been preliminarily divided in 150 plots with the knowledge of the LA, out of which 110 have been occupied with structures; inhabitants have in some cases inherited or sold the house, but not the land.	The plot has been occupied informally and then re-blocked through a layout that has been approved by the LA; there is currently no record that the land or houses have been transacted.
Land use	Largely residential; only one plot has a fully-fledged business, the rest undertake small businesses within their home structures.	Largely residential; occasional small-scale food and liquor outlet within premises. There is one fully fledged guest house in the original traditional household, and a bar in the plot next door.	Largely residential; however, several small informal businesses exist in the area.
Compensation for relocation	No	Yes, when it deals with communal land encroachment	No
Structures built on the plots	Every plot (except one) has a permanent structure; many have temporary structures in the back, largely for rentals.	Most plots have a permanent structure; many have made considerable extensions to their houses; there are only few temporary structures in the area.	Virtually all structures are temporary; only two have built permanent structures.
Infrastructure	All	Water, electricity, and collective waste collection	Communal water taps and collective waste collection
Original land situation	Green-field site (Municipal)	Traditional land	Green-field site (Municipal)
Settlement date	2000	2010	End of 1990s
Languages	Mainly Damara	Oshiwambo	Various
Settlement	Formal	Formal	Informal
Employment	Mainly low-income employees (e.g. domestic workers)	Mainly low-income employees (e.g. domestic workers, informal traders)	Partly low-income employees and partly unemployed
Relationship to FLT	None. Attempted to get funding from FLT on the grounds of research purposes	None.	Freedom Square is set to become one of the three pilots
Relationship to BTP	Each member benefited from the programme, was used to build houses	None.	None, however it is likely for this recourse to be employed once the land process is sorted
Social progression of grassroots leadership	Chairperson, elected/nominated to a ruling party position	Regional coordinator, currently in 'Land and housing committee' at the Town Council	Enumerators currently 'volunteering' within the Municipality

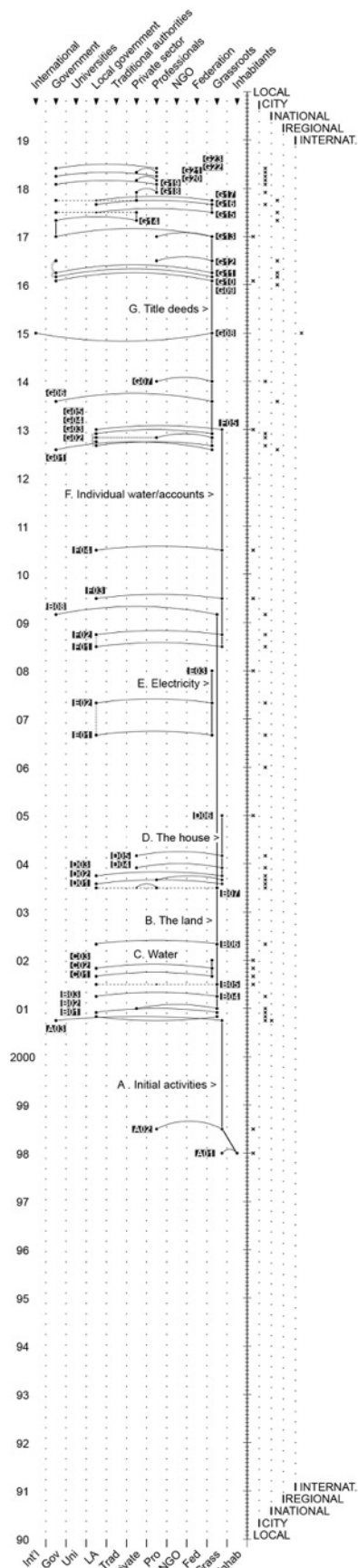
	Windhoek	Oshakati	Gobabis
Financial component	State micro-finance (BTP)	Community finance (SDFN)	None, but eventual community or state micro-finance is likely
Local economies	Present, but limited; probably due to geographical location	To a very limited extent; most trading activities occurring elsewhere	Abundantly; possibly due to unemployment and distance to centre of trading activities
Trigger	Lack of affordability, cost of rent and poor living conditions	Lack of affordability, poor living conditions	Process of displacement
Location	Peripheral, but 'central' within the periphery	Peripheral	Peripheral
Choice of location	Group decided, after negotiation with LA, who wanted for them to locate elsewhere	LA decided	Joint decision, after process of negotiating with LA on upgrading instead of relocation
Relevance (summary)	First time for the group. One of many cases for LA, but several stakeholders regard case as 'example'	First time for group and LA. Only case of Federation-led land and housing process.	First time for all stakeholders in the 'city-wide' modality.
Role of the state	Mobilise political support and private sector	Negligible. Assistance with surveying outline.	Only recently, provision of funds to purchase material for water reticulation. Indirectly, through a central government fund, the LA was able to install services.
Roles at the LA	Mainly community development and planning divisions	Mainly property management divisions	Mainly community development division
Roles among professionals	Planners and surveyors	None	Planners, architects, and surveyors
Role of the NGO	None	Support with layouts, finance	Throughout the whole process and across activities
Role of the university	Indirect; university lecturers assisted the group and afterwards they've engaged their students to learn from the case.	None	Instrumental; planning studios were of strategic importance for the process on the ground and for the students involved.
Other roles	Private sector, through CSR, sponsored professional costs.	None	International organisations, mainly channelled through NGO
Contracts between parties	Contracts between groups and builders.	Verbal agreements	MoU between LA and NGO/Federation; MoU between university and NGO/Federation; also contracts between groups and builders.

9.2. Annexure 2: Process analysis visuals

Symbology

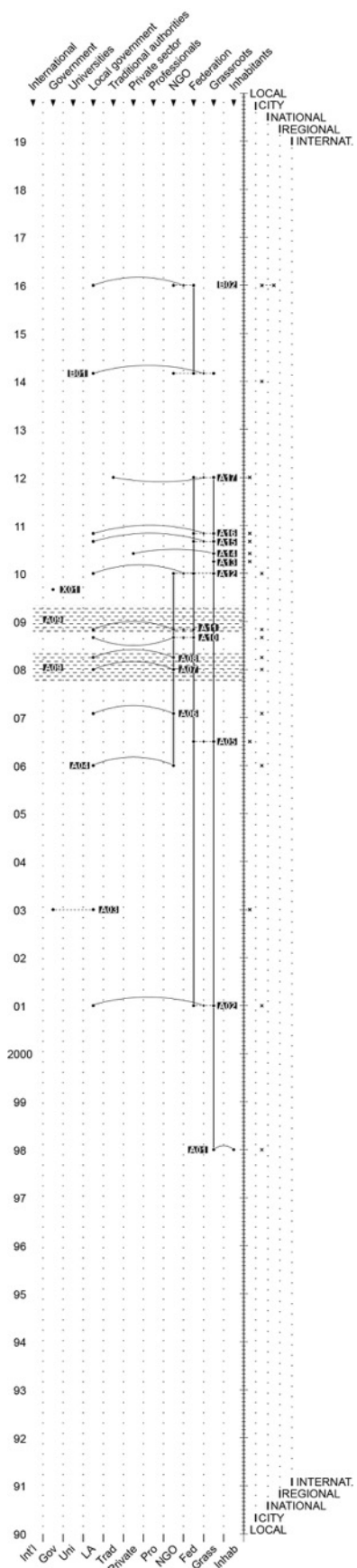
-  An engagement that facilitated a way forward
-  An engagement that slowed down the process
-  An engagement that was indirect but consequential
-  A partnership between two parties, through which the contact with a third party was made possible
-  A sequence of processes
-  Confrontation
-  Natural event
-  Geographical location of the event
-  Movement from another location to the site of the event

WINDHOEK



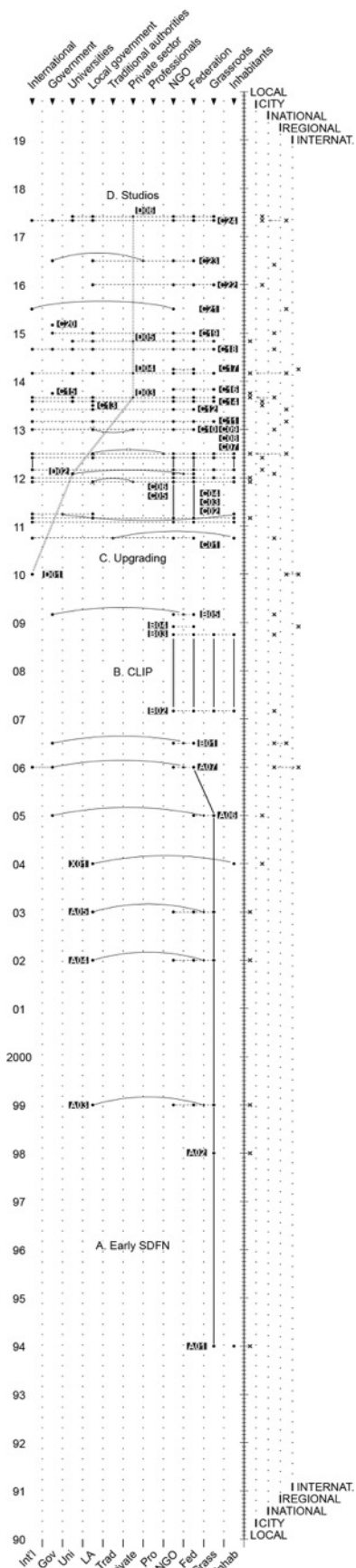
A01	Semi-organised inhabitants start saving and consult another group on how to constitute
A02	Group approaches lawyer to draft their constitution
A03	Group registers with the Ministry as a welfare organization
B01	Group applies for a plot of land in Goreangab, their application is refused and an alternative (farther) site is offered
B02	Group insists on the site and convinces local authority
B03	Approach a contractor for machinery to clear the site; it does it free of charge
B04	Municipality surveys the perimeter of the area, which consists of two blocks
B05	The municipal planner and the group engage in 'informal demarcation', and group moves in with temporary structures
B06	Municipality installs two water points and toilets
B07	Municipality helps group to put together application for lawyer to register the blocks of land in the deeds office
B08	Blocks of land registered at the deeds office
C01	Group applies for water, official asks them to take the measurements of the place so he can draw the plans
C02	Group takes measurements and submits to Municipality
C03	Municipality approves, group starts building the installation by themselves
D01	Group requests information on Build Together loan
D02	Group referred to technician to get the drawing for the houses done
D03	Group submits application, and is approved
D04	Group approaches material suppliers and negotiate for a discount for bulk
D05	Group drafts contract with contractor to build houses
D06	Houses are done, group moves in
E01	Group applies for electricity, but has very little means; Community Development writes a letter of support
E02	Electricity division develops 'on the go' financing system where installation cost is distributed throughout monthly payments
E03	Electricity is installed
F01	Group applies for 'pre-paid' water supply in views that collective payment was proving socially difficult
F02	Water division investigates a new system
F03	After considerable time a new system is installed, however it malfunctions
F04	Municipality removes devices and install new ones, over-charged costs 'credited' to account of individuals
F05	As accounts had been individualized at the municipality level, individual waste bins are installed
G01	Group requests meeting with Minister to get exemption to build plots smaller than 300m2; Minister agrees but asks group to consult with City of Windhoek
G02	Group approaches the Municipality; submission is then made to Traffic Engineers, who recommend a one-way road to fit Municipal standards
G03	Councillors are reluctant to agree on lower standards, but eventually agree
G04	Surveyor helps the group with drawing up the area, gives estimate valuation of land
G05	Council resolution giving a go-ahead to the group
G06	Ministry issues letter allowing group to build plots smaller than 300m2
G07	Surveyor drafts updated plans
G08	Group seeks funds to cover the planning and conveyancing costs; approach American embassy without success
G09	Group approaches Ministry of Land Reform, an employee raises this to the attention of the Deputy Minister
G10	Deputy Minister visits Dibasen's houses and is positively impressed, recommends support to Minister
G11	Minister orders support from 'flexible land tenure' project, but project team refuses
G12	The matter is raised to the attention of the Office of the President; the group seeks advice from planner
G13	Presidential advisors visit Dibasen's houses; planner joins to provide further technical input
G14	Presidential advisors study the case and consults with two major banks on the matter
G15	Group is brought to State House to a meeting with two banks and advisors; pledge support if changes to the constitution are effected
G16	Group seeks advice from Community Development division, finds that no changes are required
G17	Group comes back to the banks and the advisors and the matter is clarified
G18	Bank transfers funds to planning office
G19	Planning offices submits these to statutory bodies (MURD); these are approved
G20	Bank transfers funds to surveyor to draft final plan
G21	Surveyor finalizes plans and submits to other professionals and registries
G22	Bank transfers funds to conveyancers*
G23	Conveyancers prepare documents and submit to statutory bodies (MLR)*

OSHAKATI



A01	Saving groups begin to form and constitute
A02	Through the Federation, groups apply for land; local authority agrees to allocate land in the east end of the town but advises SDFN for members to strengthen savings as their funds were too little
A03	A surveyor working at the ministry but stationed at Oshakati, surveys the perimeter of the land
A04	NHAG draws preliminary layout and submits it to local authority
A05	Groups continue to strengthen savings
A06	Plans are approved by local authority
A07	NHAG submits drawings for the houses
A08	Local authority approves plans for houses
A09	Heavy rains cause particularly damaging flooding in Oshakati, no construction possible
A10	Local authority writes to NHAG-SDFN arguing that due to floods, relocations had to be made to 'higher areas'
A11	NHAG-SDFN write to CEO arguing for permanence on agreed upon site, negotiate preventive measures against floods
A12	Incoming CEO agrees for the construction of houses to start
A13	Members clear up the land for construction
A14	Private contractors are engaged by individual members, some organise and receive discount
A15	Local authority installs water infrastructure up to each block, members organise with assistance of the Federation to build within the block
A16	Waste collection and electricity are also installed by the local authority
A17	Owner in bordering traditionally-owned land dies, son takes over and stops some of the development in his land
B01	Local authority writes to SDFN-NHAG that new land would be allocated to them in Onawa
B02	NHAG brings council members to Gobabis for them to see upgrading progress
X01	Compensation policy approved by cabinet

GOBABIS



A01	Semi-organised groups start saving, but later it becomes dormant; informal settlements start to form
A02	Hatago savings group becomes active again
A03	Negotiations with the local authority start, contact with Federation and NHAG
A04	Group purchases block of land
A05	Houses built, first house opened with a ceremony
A06	Group efforts are recognized at the ministerial level
A07	Hatago group's process honoured as 'best practice' by UN-Habitat
B01	SDFN-NHAG meet minister at Africities summit in Nairobi, speak of a nation-wide enumeration project
B02	CLIP programme starts
B03	Programme ends, 235 settlements included; 7 informal settlements in Gobabis are enumerated
B04	CLIP presented in WUF in Nanjing, China
B05	CLIP results published and presented to Minister
C01	Support from Spanish NGO starts, three sites are identified; Gobabis is included
C02	Enumeration takes place in Kanaan
C03	Community meetings take place with the presence of local authority officials and participants from other regions
C04	Municipality installs water taps and dry toilets in Kanaan with donation from Dutch municipality; toilets don't work due to technical failure
C05	Enumeration in Kanaan ends, feedback session with Municipality and handover of certificates to participants
C06	Freedom Square starts with enumeration
C07	CLIP rolled out in all informal settlements in Gobabis
C08	Enumeration concludes
C09	Feedback meeting, members express rejection to rumours of relocation; members of Angola and Zimbabwe take part
C10	Spanish NGO decides to end enumeration, starts engaging local authority on implementation; with little response from local authority
C11	Spanish NGO, NHAG and SDFN, tapping into SDI network, organise trip to South Africa with local authority officials
C12	Gobabis CEO and others participate in workshop in Benguela, Angola
C13	Municipality discusses tenure options for informal settlements
C14	SDFN-NHAG sign MoU with Gobabis Municipality; upgrading, instead of relocation, is announced
C15	Perimeter of Freedom Square is surveyed through the 'flexible land tenure' project
C16	Internal subdivisions of parcels made by inhabitants with assistance of NGO in Tuerijandjera and Kanaan
C17	Freedom Square process presented at WUF in Medellín, Colombia
C18	Presentation of progress with HabitAfrica support presented at HRDC, Spanish ambassador and partners from Zimbabwe attend; HabitAfrica support winds down
C19	Groups continue to form, savings continue; extension of services with central government subsidies is possible
C20	Freedom Square becomes officially a pilot of 'flexible land tenure'
C21	Through partnership between SDI and GLTN, NHAG attends workshop where STDM is agreed to be tested
C22	Re-blocking concludes in Freedom Square
C23	MURD provides funds for water infrastructure installation
C24	Learning exchange with partners from Kenya, Uganda, Zambia and Namibia; various partners attend
D01	AAPS and SDI sign agreement of collaboration; NUST is member of AAPS
D02	MoU between SDFN-NHAG and NUST is signed
D03	Planning Studio 1: Site analysis is done with the first cohort of town planning students at NUST
D04	Planning Studio 2: Re-blocking; Opuwo mayor and members from SASDI Alliance attend
D05	Planning Studio 3: Planning workshop
D06	Planning Studio 4: Mapping and participatory planning
X01	Kanaan identified as a 'reception area' by the Municipality

9.3. Annexure 3: Guideline for interviews

Guideline for interviewing inhabitants and grassroots' representatives

Life story and social relations *Personal trajectory, innate and established social relations, labour situation, income and expenses, plans and prospects.*

Access and use of the space *How did the ones inhabiting the space accessed it? Who granted access? What are the arrangements? Are there financial and/or labour implications? Are there contracts or statements? How long are the inhabitants expected to stay? What would be a factor that could lead to relocation?*

Role of the state and 'formal' institutions *Have any of the government programmes been resorted to? If so, what was the outcome? Has any professional assisted during the process? Has any 'formal' institution (e.g. bank) played a part? Is there any self-provided 'infrastructure'?*

Viewpoints, priorities and mental conceptions *What is regarded by the respondent as 'improvement' of the household? Are the improvements actual or perceived? What is the margin for agency/transformation? What would be a desirable and undesirable scenario? How is the future development of the land and/or housing practice envisioned?*

Socio-spatial and cultural manifestations of autogestion *Is self-determination emerging as an antipode to the local/central government? Is a degree of autonomy favoured? Are there any alternative socio-spatial arrangements present? What other symbols of self-determination exist? How do these strive or not?*

Other aspects that will be investigated outside the interview are: photographs and/or sketches of the spaces, spatial characteristics (e.g. dimensions, orientation, materials).

Guideline for interviewing stakeholders (professionals, authorities, academics)

1. Thank you for granting this interview, please introduce yourself.
2. How would you say your work relates to the issues of land and housing in Namibia?
3. How would you describe the platform from which you operate (e.g. civil society, government, professional)? (Prompt: explain possibility of performing various roles, if necessary.)
4. Could you please describe a successful 'land and/or housing practice' in your experience? (Prompt: expand on 'land and housing practice', if necessary.)
5. What would you say are the enablers/inhibitors for enabling access to land and housing for the largest number?
6. Please account on the specific cases of Windhoek, Oshakati, and Gobabis? [Expand as much as possible.]
7. Please elaborate on the stakeholders involved, and describe whether you see a discrepancy between the theory and practice in the role they are expected to perform.
8. Please expand on the role of self-organised groups, specific on the importance of self-organisation and agency.
9. [In case the stakeholder has experience in other countries.] Please reflect on the specificities of the 'case' of Namibia, in terms of land and housing delivery.
10. [In case the stakeholder has experience in other fields.] Please reflect on the specificities of the issues of land and housing, in relation to other issues of socio-economic importance.
11. Allow respondent to reflect liberally on the role of her/his institution, profession, discipline, skills.

9.4. Annexure 4: Information sheet and consent form

INFORMATION SHEET AND CONSENT FORM: PARTICIPATING PARTIES.

Title of research project: Contemporary land and housing practices in Namibia

Dear sir/madam:

My name is Guillermo Delgado, and I'm conducting research on land and housing practices in Namibia. I'm doing this to get a degree at the University of Cape Town in South Africa.

I'm looking for households who have managed to gain and maintain access to land and housing in Namibia, and I would like to invite you to participate in this project. I will also speak with professionals and authorities on this matter.

The project will document these practices and try to understand how these give new meanings to the current access to land and housing options that exist. I would like to offer the outcome of this research as useful material for practitioners (e.g. architects, planners, sociologists) to engage meaningfully in the land and housing question. If you agree to participate, I will also share the outcome of this process with you.

Participation is voluntary, and the choice to do so is yours alone. If you choose not to participate, there will be no negative consequences. If you choose to participate, you can still choose to withdraw at any time; also without negative consequences.

I would be very grateful if you can assist me by allowing me to interview you.

This first interview will take about half an hour. If you allow me, I will record it with my audio recorder and then transcribe it. If not, I will only take notes; if that's OK with you. If you also allow me, I will also take photographs of your house and of other items you suggest. I will then come back to you and give you a copy of these, which you can keep.

You can also choose to remain anonymous during this interview. In this way, you'll be able to speak freely without fearing someone will identify you by your name.

I may need to come back for a second and third interview, but this is also if you agree.

I will keep these interviews safe. I will store this electronically with a password that is only known to me. I will only disclose this information to my supervisors at the university, and to the ones evaluating my work if they request this. You should also tell me if you have specific concerns regarding the disclosure of any particular information.

If you feel uncomfortable with any of the questions, you can choose not to reply. If my presence puts you into uncomfortable situations you can ask me to leave. Please also report to me if there are any questions arising from any of your neighbours, family, or friends; I am willing to clarify any matters and for this purpose I put my full details below.

It thank you very much in advance for your time,

Guillermo Delgado
Email: dlgedu001@myuct.ac.za
Mobile (Namibia): 081 8575792
Mobile (South Africa): +27 076 063 9027

CONSENT FORM

Title of research project: Contemporary land and housing practices in Namibia

Guillermo Delgado
Email: djgedu001@myuct.ac.za
Mobile (Namibia): 081 8575792
Mobile (South Africa): +27 076 063 9027

- ☐ I have been given the Information Sheet
- ☐ I understand its contents
- ☐ I have been given the opportunity to ask questions about this research
- ☐ I understand I have the right to withdraw at any time
- ☐ I would like to receive information related to this project
- ☐ I would like to get a copy of this consent form
- ☐ I confirm I agree to participate
- ☐ I allow for my identity to be used in the study
- ☐ I allow for the products of this study to be used in further research and outreach

Participant name:

Signature:

Date:

.....

I confirm I have provided the participant with the Information Sheet and applied for approval to the Ethics in Research Committee at the University of Cape Town.

Researcher's name: Guillermo Delgado

Signature:

Date:

9.5. Annexure 5: Policy and legal framework for Namibia's spatial production

	Legislation	What it does
1937 [1979]	Deeds Registries Act 47 of 1937	Regulates registration of deeds.
1954	Town Planning Ordinance, Ordinance 18 of 1954 as amended ("Town Planning Ordinance")	Stipulates implementation of Town Planning Schemes (TPS) as guidelines for the future spatial development, and the establishment of the NAMPAB (Namibian Planning and Advisory Board).
1963	Townships & Divisions of Land Ordinance, Ordinance 11 of 1963 as amended ("Townships Ordinance").	Regulates the establishment, regulation, control, consolidation and subdivision of township land. It also establishes three categories of land (erven, townlands, and land outside townships and townlands), with different aspects of the ordinance applying to each.
1970	Subdivision of Agricultural Land Act 70 of 1970, as amended ("Subdivision of Agricultural Land")	Controls the spatial development of rural areas.
1977	Rents Ordinance 13 of 1977 and upcoming Rent Bill	Determines aspects of the renting of dwellings and establishes rental boards (currently not active). A new rent bill is being developed.
1985	Squatters Proclamation, Act 21 of 1985	Deals with unlawful occupation of land, but hasn't been invoked since independence.
1992	Local Authorities Act, Act 23 of 1992	Attributes LAs with the faculties to prepare local housing policies, develop land for housing, develop housing schemes and oversee them.
1992	Regional Councils Act 22 of 1992	Stipulates establishment and activities of regional councils.
1993	Land Survey Act, Act 33 of 1993	Establishes the methods and formats to survey.
1993	National Housing Enterprise Act, Act 5 of 1993	Establishes the National Housing Enterprise (NHE), a housing para-statal that develops and finances housing for lower and middle-income groups.
1995	Agricultural (Commercial) Land Reform Act 6 of 1995 (ACLRA)	Grants the state the status of preferential purchaser of agricultural land, under the policy of 'willing seller, willing buyer' as long as it is in the public interest. It also regulates prices of land in such sales through stipulating a valuation procedure.

2000	Traditional Authorities Act, Act 25 of 2000	Regarding land use planning, traditional authorities are compelled to cooperate with government and to ensure their constituencies remain informed.
2000	Decentralisation Enabling Act 33 of 2000	Stipulates decentralisation from central to regional and local governments.
2000	National Housing Development Act, Act 28 of 2000	Establishes the National Housing Advisory Committee to advise the line minister on housing matters and establishes guidelines for the Decentralised Build Together Programme.
2009	Sectional Titles Act, Act 2 of 2009	Stipulates single sections of exclusive property and shared common property.
2012	Flexible Land Tenure, Act 4 of 2012	Provides an easier way to access tenure and creates new forms of title for this purpose. (<i>Regulations for this Act are outstanding, and therefore not yet implemented.</i>)
2017	Urban and Regional Planning Bill (URPB)	Streamlines the land delivery process from the planning perspective
	Common law	Matters related to evictions
1998	National Land Policy	Provides for a unitary land system in Namibia and stipulates various kinds of tenure
2001	National Resettlement Policy	It aims to redress imbalances of the past by allocating land for previously-disadvantaged citizens.
2002	Land Use Planning Policy	
2002	National Water Policy	States that everyone shall have the access to sufficient and safe water.
2009 [1991]	National Housing Policy	Enacted in 1991 and revised in 2009
2016	Harambee Prosperity Plan	Aims at building 20,000 houses; 26,000 residential plots; 50,000 rural toilets; and eradicate 'the bucket system' by 2020.
2004	Vision 2030	Projects improved access to land and projects number of houses built to meet increasing backlog.
2016	Growth at Home	Namibia's strategy for industrialisation, aims to improve access to land for business purposes.
2017	Fifth National Development Plan	Land and housing encompassed under 'social transformation'.

1994 [1976]	International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights	Compels Namibia to observe the right to adequate housing, through the provision in Article 144 in the Constitution. Namibia ratified this in 1994.
1997	Blantyre Declaration	Compels states to put 30 percent of women in decision-making positions (some countries have enacted this in housing allocation mechanisms, e.g. Ethiopia)
2015	Agenda 2063. The Africa We Want	Makes provision for decent and affordable housing in clean, secure and well planned environments.
2015	Sustainable Development Goals	Sets development goals in various categories; Goal 11 deals specifically with socio-spatial matters.
2016	New Urban Agenda	Sets a number of parameters through which sustainable urban development is to be achieved.

With information from Genis (2015), LAC (2005), Ulrich & Meurers (2015), and UN-Habitat (2005).

9.6. Annexure 6: Section from the Flexible Land Tenure Act 4 of 2012 pertaining the formation of associations

16. Regulations

(1) The Minister may after consultation with the committee referred to in subsection (3), make regulations:

[...]

(g) prescribing a model constitution for an association of a starter title scheme or a land hold title scheme, prescribing compulsory provisions to be contained in such a constitution, prohibiting certain provisions in such a constitution, prescribing the manner in which such a constitution may be amended or prescribing the powers and duties of such associations;

[...]

(3) The Minister must appoint a committee that may –

(a) recommend the making of regulations;

(b) make recommendations relating to the amendment of this Act or relating to the manner in which this Act should be administered.

18. Associations

(1) The association of a starter title scheme or land hold title scheme –

(a) must hold an annual general meeting which is called in the manner provided by the constitution of the association concerned; and

(b) may hold a special general meeting for a specific purpose (including the dismissal of the committee and the election of a new committee) that is called in the manner prescribed in the constitution of the association concerned.

(2) The association of a land hold title scheme or a starter title scheme is managed by a committee whose composition is determined by the constitution of the association.

(3) A decision of a majority of the members present at a meeting of a committee of an association referred to in subsection (1), is a decision of the committee: Provided that in the case of an equality of votes, the person who presides at that meeting, has a casting vote in addition to his or her deliberative vote.

(4) The committee of the association of a land hold title scheme or a starter title scheme is elected in an election conducted in the prescribed manner in which –

(a) in the case of a starter title scheme, every holder of rights in the scheme has one vote;

(b) in the case of a land hold title scheme, a person may exercise one vote for every plot owned by him or her.

(5) Subject to any provision in the constitution of the association relating to the dismissal of the committee by a general meeting of the association, the term of office of a committee elected as contemplated in subsection (4), is one year.

9.7. Annexure 7: Fragments from City of Windhoek Council Resolution
416/11/2012

[Special Municipal Council Minutes: 2012-11-26]

**BRB.2 [COM] THE DISSOLUTION OF THE DIBASEN
HOMELESS COMMITTEE AND THE SUBSEQUENT
SUBDIVISION OF ERVEN 3214 AND 3215,
GOREANGAB INTO ERVEN SMALLER
THAN 300 m2
(L/3214, 3215/GG)**

RESOLVED

[...]

- 4 That Erf 3214, Goreangab be rezoned from 'private open space' to 'general residential' with a density of 1:150 m2
- 5 That Erf 3215, Goreangab be rezoned from 'private open space' to 'general residential' with a density of 1:150 m2.
- 6 That no betterment fee be charged as the rezoning is the responsibility of the City of Windhoek.
- 7 That Erf 3214, Goreangab be subdivided into Portions 1 to 25 and the Remainder as shown on Plan P/4097/A attached as page 7 to the agenda.

[...]

- 6 That no betterment fee be charged as the rezoning is the responsibility of the City of Windhoek.

[...]

- 9 That once the statutory procedures are finalized, the newly created erven be duly transferred to the rightful occupants of such portion whose names appear on the list attached as page 8 to the agenda.

[...]

- 11 That Erf 3215, Goreangab be subdivided into Portions 1 to 25 and the Remainder as shown on Plan P/4097/A attached as page 7 to the agenda.

[...]

- 21 That the Dibasen Homeless Committee be responsible for the statutory applications, land surveying and eventual conveyancing that will see individual Title Deeds be transferred to it's [sic] current members.

[...]

RESOLUTION 416/11/2012